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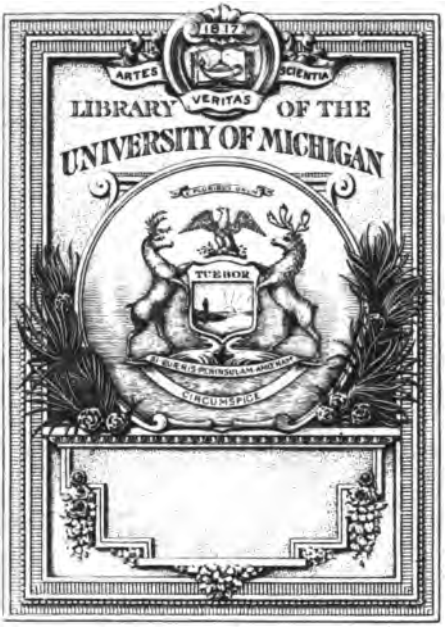

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THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

LATE

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH;

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, STUDIES,

AND

WRITINGS,

By WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

ONE OF HIS LORDSHIP'S CHAPLAINS,

AND LONG HIS MOST INTIMATE AND CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON; G. WILKIE; J. NUNN; J. CUTHELL; LONGMAN AND CO.; CADELL AND DAVIES; LAW AND WHITTAKER; LACKINGTON AND CO.; J. RICHARDSON; J. M. RICHARDSON; J. BLACK; R. SCHOLEY; J. HATCHARD; BALDWIN AND CO.; J. BOOTH; J. WALKER; J. ROBINSON; B. REYNOLDS; SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL; AND T. AND J. ALLMAN.

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DISCOURSES,

&c.

DISCOURSE I.

THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF PERSEVERANCE.

2 THESSALONIANS, III. 13.

Be not weary in well doing.

THE honour of being thus called to plead the cause of a Society, whose reputation must run coeval with that of religion and virtue, is somewhat qualified by the consideration, that the subject has been already treated by so many persons of superior eminence and ability. The motives that have place in compositions of other kinds, can have none here; since in vain would it be for the preacher to hope, that he shall be able either to invent new matter, or polish the old into new beauty and lustre.

Discouraging, however, as this reflection may at first sight appear, it affords no solid reason why such anniversaries should be discontinued or slighted. Successive generations of men require successive information; and the same men, though they may want to be informed but once, may want often to be

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reminded. Good impressions, we know, are impaired in much less time than that of a year, by the cares and pleasures of life, and need therefore to be frequently retouched. Many hear with more effect than they read: many also may hear, who do not read at all: and of those who do read, numbers may read a new sermon, who never read the old, though "the old be better;" and, by coming into new hands, it may procure us new friends and allies. Fresh hints, and those of consequence, may be afforded by the occurrences and publications of the times. Fresh accounts are communicated of the progress made, to encourage the desponding; or of the farther supplies requisite, to give the opulent and generous an opportunity of furnishing them.

It is matter of general complaint, that the fervour and zeal which, at the commencement of a charitable institution, diffused warmth and splendour on all around, are but too apt, by degrees, to languish and die away, unless some expedient be employed periodically to revive and cherish the holy flame. Let me congratulate the Society on the additional circumstances of solemnity, devised, with equal benevolence and taste, to grace their anniversary, in the place where we are now assembled. The eyes and ears of all present will attest the propriety with which they have been adapted to answer the purpose in view.

And respecting that part of the entertainment to be provided by the preacher, it is but doing justice to the subject to say, that, though in itself old, and "what we have heard from the beginning," to the

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well-disposed mind it is ever new. No man is the less pleased to receive a visit from a much-loved friend, on the account of his having received many before. No man nauseates the meal of to-day, because one composed of the like salutary viands was served up to him a year ago. Should he do so, we well know where the fault must lie; not in the quality of the meat, but in the appetite of the eater.

To prevent any thing of the kind from taking place, let us strengthen and encourage one another by applying, as we may with great propriety do, the exhortation of the apostle to those who are engaged in forwarding the designs of the Society. Let us endeavour to show, that all such are engaged in well-doing, and therefore that they ought "not to be "weary."

Manifold, in the present state of the world, are the wants of mankind; and the virtues of one part of the species, consist much in relieving the necessities of the other. It is the leading feature in *his* character, on whom angelic as well as human spirits are directed to fix their attention, that "He went "about doing good;" in other words, as the explanation immediately follows, "healing all that were "oppressed of the devil[a]," and afflicted with the maladies and calamities introduced into the world by sin, of which that evil spirit was the author. An idea of a similar nature is always supposed to be conveyed, when we say of any person departed, that "he did much good in his life-time." Nay,

[a] Acts, x. 38.

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to the great Governor of the Universe, we have no other way of giving the glory due, than by proclaiming, as we are enjoined to do, that "Jehovah is "good, and that his tender mercies are over all his "works[b]." Godlike are the labours of charity; and they who are employed in them are, without all doubt, employed in "well-doing."

The external indigence of our fellow-creatures, as it strikes directly upon our senses, is apt to be first and principally noticed. The case of a brother or a sister destitute of food and raiment, of habitation, health, and comfort, calls upon us, for commiseration and assistance, in a voice scarcely to be resisted by the man, much less by the Christian. And to the praise of our age and nation be it spoken, no pains are spared to relieve all such objects of bodily distress.

But the plan of the Society extends farther, and penetrates deeper into the constitution of human nature. It enters the cottage of clay, and reaches the inhabitant contained within, the immortal guest doomed for a while to sojourn here below; succouring the infirmities and necessities to which, during such its temporary abode upon earth, the soul of man is become subject. For there is an inward and spiritual, as well as an outward and visible, poverty; and that we may conceive proper ideas of the former, the sacred writers have described it under figures and images borrowed from the latter. There is a species of food necessary for the support

[b] Psal. cxlv. 9.

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of the mind, after which it is said to "hunger and "thirst." There are garments, with which the spirits of just men appear clothed: and there is a state of the soul which, through all its powers and faculties, is a state of health and salvation. Nothing of a corporeal kind was certainly intended in that reproof given by the Spirit to the church of Laodicea—"Thou sayest I am rich and increased in "goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not "that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, "and blind, and naked[c]." An attention to this intellectual distress and misery, and the proper methods of relieving them, is excellent in proportion to the value of the subject, and the more dangerous consequences of their being neglected; and therefore constitutes the sublimer part of charity. When Christ healed bodily diseases, he did it principally that he might manifest his ability to heal those that are spiritual:—"That ye may know that the Son of "man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to "the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and "go unto thine house[d]." With particular disorders of the bodily frame some are afflicted, and some are not; and they whom our Lord healed of one, yet died afterwards of another. The saying in which all men are interested, and which ought, therefore, "of all "men to be received," is, "that Jesus Christ came "into the world to SAVE SINNERS[e]."

But surely in vain did he come, unless the knowledge of this salvation be conveyed to those whom it

[c] Rev. iii. 17. [d] Matt. ix. 6. [e] 1 Tim. i. 15.

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concerns. This knowledge is not born with us, nor are we to expect it by inspiration from above. Heaven has revealed it once, but left it from thenceforth to be communicated by man to man. He whose lamp has been kindled, is enjoined to kindle those of his descendants, that so the Gospel may run and be glorified, to the end of time. This indeed has been the process ordained from the beginning; for of the patriarchal religion, derived from Adam by tradition, may that be said, which the Psalmist hath said of the same religion in sum and substance, as it was republished in writing by Moses: "God established a testimony, he appointed a law, "which he commanded our fathers that they should "make known to their children, that the generation "to come might know them, even the children "which should be born, who should arise and de-"clare them to their children; that they might set "their hope in God, and not forget the works of "God, but keep his commandments[f]."

Through the degeneracy and apostasy of nations, losing the knowledge originally imparted to their ancestors, it will sometimes happen, that parents can no longer instruct their progeny, or educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in which they themselves perhaps have not been educated. Ignorance, instead of knowledge, is then transmitted from generation to generation, of which each grows worse than the preceding: till, at length, "darkness covers the land, and gross darkness the

[f] Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6, 7.

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"inhabitants thereof[g];" a darkness that may indeed be felt, and that ought to be bewailed, as it is a sure forerunner of ruin and excision.—"My people are "destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast "rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; seeing "thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also "forget thy children[h]."

But suppose this not altogether the case. It is among the evils of external poverty, and one of the greatest of those evils, to be the cause of that other poverty which is internal. The poor, unless care be taken of them in this respect by the rich, are by that very circumstance often deprived of the means of knowledge. Much of their time is of necessity otherwise employed; and when they enjoy any little intervals of leisure, opportunities and instructors are wanting.

It may be said, perhaps, What occasion have the poor for knowledge? For knowledge of many kinds, none at all: they are better without it: ignorance for them is preferable. But there is an ignorance—that above mentioned—which is attended with effects very prejudicial to the welfare of society in this world, and that of individuals in the next—productive of vice and ill manners, of confusion, and every evil work. Good may be known without being practised; but it cannot be practised if it be not known.

"If we inquire," says a late writer, in his admirable treatise on the subject of the *Poor*—"if we

g Isa. lx. 2. h Hos. iv. 6.

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"inquire into the state of those countries where "the people are grossly ignorant, we shall find the "most unhappy consequences arising from their "deplorable situation. The savages in America are "but in a small degree raised above the irrational "tribes: the populace in Portugal, whose whole "knowledge consists in a credulous superstition, are "now the most cruel and barbarous people in Eu-"rope; and the lower class in London, who are in "general very ignorant, are ripe for every crime. "Had the same degree of knowledge of which some "complain as improper for the commonalty, been "imparted to them, there is reason to believe it "would have civilized their manners and corrected "their morals. Some of our late eloquent and ju-"dicious historians have set in a very striking view "the barbarity and misery of the middle ages, "arising almost wholly from the ignorance which "then overspread Europe.

"Wherever gross ignorance prevails, there either "gross vices or absolute stupidity will abound. It "is by a school education chiefly that we receive the "rudiments of knowledge. Though men may be, "and it is hoped are, improved by public discourses, "yet, unless they have received some previous in-"struction, they can reap but little benefit from "them. It appears, then, to be an object of great "importance to the public, as well as to individuals, "that the meanest of the people should be taught to "read, and be instructed in the duties of religion "and morality. This seems to be one of the most "necessary steps towards the civilizing of a country;

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"and this instruction may be given at an early "period, before they are fit for labour, or at times when they are not otherwise employed[1]."

There must ever be in all communities a considerable majority of poor, to perform the various labours of life. In return for their temporals, we should communicate to them of our spirituals. If they, by their labours, furnish us with "the meat that "perisheth," it is but reasonable that we, especially as it can be done without much labour, should supply them with "that meat which endureth for ever." If they "give us to drink," we should in return present them with "the water springing up unto "eternal life." Their spiritual necessities are the same with those of the rich; they have equally souls to be saved, and stand therefore equally in need of the knowledge requisite to save them.

This being perfectly known to the God of the spirits of all flesh, he has not been unmindful of them in the dispensations of his grace, but has adapted his Gospel to the wants of all alike.

The evidence, on which its authority stands, is not veiled from vulgar sight by the clouds of metaphysical subtlety; it depends not on intricate arguments, and tedious consequences, which the poor have neither leisure to study, nor ability to understand. Jesus could not have performed the miracles which he did perform, unless God had been with him; and if God were with him, then the doctrines taught by him, under the sanction of those miracles, were also of God. The apostles believed in him,

[1] M'Farlan's Inquiries concerning the Poor, p. 246.

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because they saw his mighty works; and we believe them when they tell us so, because they could not have deceived the world if they would, and would not have done it if they could. A little plain common sense sees all this; and more need not be seen to induce any man to become a Christian.

As the evidence is stated, so the doctrines of salvation are taught, with a condescension to the capacities of all. To render them at the same time intelligible and agreeable, they are delivered in the pleasing form of history, and illustrated by comparisons and similitudes taken from the most familiar objects in the natural world, and the concerns of ordinary life. A poor man is thus taught, in a week, more than philosophy could teach those that were most learned in it, for a series of ages: he is taught to know God, and his various dispensations to mankind: and, with respect to morals and the duties of society, he is taught—what every wise government would wish that its citizens might all be taught.

Accordingly we find it given as one mark of the divinity of the Gospel, and as the circumstance which discriminates it from the wisdom of the world, that it was preached by Christ and his apostles to the poor. Not for the reasons insinuated by unbelievers, ancient and modern, that they were either afraid or ashamed to preach it to the rich and the learned; but because the former were clear from many prejudices and evil passions which adhered to the latter, and therefore were better disposed to receive it. These received it first, and had the honour to lead the way to the others, who followed after, in due

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time, from every rank and order of life, as they could be brought to give it a fair and impartial hearing. But be it ever remembered, when this argument is under discussion, that the truth of God must finally rest upon its proper evidence, and not upon the incident of its being accepted or rejected by those to whom it is proposed. Such acceptance or rejection must afterwards be accounted for, from the different tempers, dispositions, and circumstances of mankind. And it requires but a very moderate degree of acquaintance with human nature, to assign adequate reasons why, when the same doctrine is preached to two different persons, one should put it from him, and depart "sorrowful," while the other embraces it, and "goes on his way rejoicing."

If it be inquired whether the poor be capable of making any considerable proficiency in the school of Christ? experience will answer in the affirmative. With a little plain instruction, they can apprehend the articles of faith as contained in the apostles' creed, and the rules of practice as laid down in the commandments. They can learn to trust in God, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier: they can give him thanks for what they have, and pray to him for what they want. They can love their Saviour, and for his sake show kindness to their brethren, whom he has redeemed. One may often behold, among the lower ranks, that attention to the distresses of each other, that earnest desire, and, what is of more worth, that unwearied endeavour to remove or alleviate them, which do credit to the human heart, wherever they are found.

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A poor person, after labouring through the day, will pass the night in watching with a sick neighbour; while the rich pursue their pleasures, the scholar retires to his library, and the virtuoso to his cabinet, safe from the importunity of the wretched, and where the voice of misery never penetrates. Let not the pride of wealth or science look down with contempt upon the poor, since they often possess and exhibit that charity which is the end of knowledge, the comfort of society, the balm of life; and by his proficiency in which, every man is to be tried, at the judgement of the great day.—"Hath "not God chosen the poor?" Let not MAN, then, despise them.

Upon these grounds it is, that the Society has been employed, for near a century, in disseminating Christian Knowledge among the poor. Thousands and ten thousands of children have been snatched from the jaws of ruin, from ignorance and vice, and educated in the fear of God, in the charity-schools originally fostered and reared through Great Britain and Ireland, by their parental care, and which, at this time, contain above forty thousand. To this part of the plan the following testimony is borne by a celebrated prelate, in a charge delivered so long ago as the year 1716, though published only a few months since. He is speaking of the great and necessary duty of catechising—"The late encou-"ragers of Charity Schools are never enough to be "commended for their care and diligence on this "head, by which they have deserved well of God "and man, and have done the church of England,

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"and the pure religion of Christ, excellent service; "and verily they shall not fail of their reward[k]."

A multitude of Bibles, Common-prayer-books, and a variety of religious tracts, adapted to the capacities and spiritual exigencies of the poor, amounting, within the space of the last fifty years only, to near three millions, have been printed and distributed by the Society, not only through England and every part of Wales, the isles of Scilly and of Man; but their care has been extended to the Greek church in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt, as well as to the conversion of the Heathens in the East Indies, where schools and missions have been established for that purpose. Translations of the proper books having been made, the inhabitants of these different countries have had opportunities of hearing and celebrating, "every one in his own "language, the wonderful works of God."

I do not enlarge upon these several objects of the Society's bounty, because, in general, the world is now well acquainted with the nature of them; and the particulars may be seen in the annual account of its proceedings. That much good has been effected, is known to all those who have been concerned in carrying these benevolent designs into execution, or who have by any means happened to fall within the reach of their influence; but how much, it never will, nor can be known, till manifested by that day which shall manifest all things.

[k] The learned and elequent bishop Atterbury's Charge to the Diocese of Rochester, in Mr. Nichols's publication of the Epistolary Correspondence, &c. vol. ii. p. 260.

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The diligence of the husbandman, with the quantity and quality of the seed sown, will then best appear, when the harvest shall crown his toil, and, "the "valleys stand so thick with corn, that they shall "laugh and sing."

Thus engaged in "well-doing," be not ye, therefore, "weary;" "for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint "not." Look back with joy and pleasure on what has been done; look forward with hope and confidence on what *may* be done. The adversary is not weary of exerting his endeavours to suppress and extinguish the religious spirit among us; be not ye weary of exerting yours (as they always have been exerted) to cherish and support it. Consider the prospect which presented itself to the first preachers of the Gospel, when they entered upon the task of *Promoting Christian Knowledge;* and consider the event: remember the "mustard-seed," and view the "tree" which it has produced. Ye are fellow-labourers with them: and according to the measures of his grace, and the course of his dispensations, Christ will be with you, as he was with them. Apostolical is your work, and suitable will be your reward. Go on, then, and prosper, in the name of the Lord; looking forward to that triumphant hour, when the scene shall open of which that now before us may serve to convey some faint resemblance; when the innumerable company of those rescued by your charity from the hands of the destroyer, and numbered among the children of God, shall be seen clothed in the robes of righteousness and salvation, arranged in shining circles around the throne, and heard singing Glory to their Redeemer, who sitteth thereon, for ever and ever.

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DISCOURSE II.

THE ANTIQUITY, USE, AND EXCELLENCE OF CHURCH MUSIC.

PSALM, LVII. 8.

Awake up, my glory; awake, lute and harp!

THE sound of that noble instrument, which for the first time we have this day heard, is in perfect unison with the words of the text. It is intended for the same purpose, and performs the same office. It calls upon us to employ all our powers and faculties in the service of him who bestowed them; to celebrate the praises of God, and give the glory due to the world's Creator and Redeemer. For this end man was formed: but it is an end which, in the present state of his nature, he is by no means disposed at all times to answer as he should do. Alive to earth, he is often dead to heaven. Troubled about many things, to the one thing needful he is apt to be inattentive. He sleepeth and must be awakened. "Awake up, therefore, my glory; "awake, lute and harp! I myself will awake right

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"early[a]." Let the instrument accompany the voice, and the heart accompany both.

In the constitution of man, as the all-wise Artist has been pleased to frame it, there are certain tones of the voice, by which the affections of the mind naturally express thenselves. The tone of sorrow is mournful and plaintive; the notes of joy, exulting and jubilant. St. James, therefore, spake with the strictest propriety, when he said, "Is any afflicted? "let him pray; is any merry? let him sing.[b]" When the spirits are raised by good news, or any other very pleasing consideration, every one whose actions are unobserved, and therefore unrestrained, will break forth into singing. It is the proper expression of pleasure; it is "the voice of joy and "health in the dwellings of the righteous." Who shall contest THEIR right so to declare and make their feelings known?" They have been in the possession of the privilege ever since the hour when, at the creation of the world, "the morning stars "sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for "joy[c];" and they will be found possessed of it, in the day when, for the redemption of the world, saints and angels shall sing together, "Blessing, and "honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth

[a] Music was used by the Pythagoreans to dissipate the dulness of the mind at first waking in the morning: and it is said, I think, of good bishop Kenn, that, immediately on rising from his bed, he seized his guitar, and played some sprightly strain, for this purpose.

[b] James, v. 13. [c] Job, xxxviii. 7.

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"upon the throne, and to the Lamb[d]!" During the intermediate period between these two great events, there is upon earth a mixture of evil and good; there is, on that account, a mixture of sorrow and joy; and the service of the church consists of PRAYER and PRAISE. We have sinned, we are afflicted, we pray: Our sins are forgiven, we rejoice, we sing.

If we consult the page of history, we find that among all nations where music has been at all understood and practised, it has been applied to this use, and employed in their religious festivals. Whatever was the object of adoration, in this manner was adoration paid. And as it is notorious, that most of the rites to be found among idolaters, were originally derived from the primæval church of God, and transferred to their false divinities, it is a fair supposition, that what was practised by one, had been first practised by the other. Short as the account of things and persons is in the Mosaic history of an infant world, we read very early of those who "handled the harp and organ[e]." It is impossible to say, at this time, what specific instruments are denoted by the Hebrew words; that they denote musical instruments of some sort, there is no doubt.

[d] Rev. v. 13.

[e] Gen. iv. 21. Jubal, said to have been "the father of such," was indeed a descendant of Cain, and the seventh only from Adam in that line. But that, even in that line, idolatry had so early taken place of the worship of the true God, does not appear.

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No sooner was there a regular national church established in Israel, a people selected by the Almighty for that very purpose, than we find music making a part of the ritual. "The trumpet was "blown in the new moon, on the solemn feast day; "such was the statute for Israel, the law of the God "of Jacob." The performers, vocal and instrumental, were ranged by the royal prophet, under divine direction, in their several classes, and appointed to wait in succession through the year[f]." At the dedication of the temple by king Solomon, they were all assembled, and performed together, the whole nation joining in a grand chorus of praise and thanksgiving, while the glory of the Lord, a body of light above the brightness of the sun, descended from heaven, and filled the house of God.

If music in the Jewish church served to enliven devotion and elevate the affections, why should it not be used, to produce the like effect among Christians? Human nature is the same, and the power of music is the same: why should there not be the same application of one to the other, for the same beneficial end, under both dispensations? Vocal music ceased not with the law: why should

[f] 1 Chron. xxv.—In imitation of king David, the emperor Charlemagne, in the university of Paris founded by him, and in other parts of his dominions, endowed schools for the study and practice of music. At church he always sung his part in the choral service, and he exhorted other princes to do the same. He was very desirous also that his daughters should attain a proficiency in singing, and to that end had masters to instruct them three hours every day. See Sir John Hawkins, vol. ii. p. 31.

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we suppose that instrumental music was abrogated with it? Surely, the trumpet may still be blown upon OUR feast day: the singers and players on instruments may still make their voices to be heard as one, in blessing and thanking the Lord God of Israel, the Redeemer of his people.

On that night, ever to be had in remembrance by us, when it pleased God to bring his first begotten into the world, the angel preached a short sermon on the subject of the nativity, and communicated to the shepherds the glad tidings of the Gospel: "Unto "you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, "which is Christ, the Lord"—Immediately heaven's white-robed choristers appeared, and sung the anthem of the season—"Glory to God in the highest, and "on earth peace, good will towards men[g]." On the evening before our Saviour's passion, when he celebrated the passover with his disciples, they sang a hymn, or psalm, together. St. Paul exhorts his converts, more than once, to cheer and animate each other, in their Christian course, by "psalms and "hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in "their hearts," as well as their voices, "to the Lord[h]." And this was the constant practice in the primitive church. Instrumental music could have no place during the times of persecution, when, for fear of their enemies, the Christians were obliged to hold their assemblies in secret chambers, in dens and caves of the earth. Organs are said by some to have

[g] Luke, ii. 13. [h] Ephes. v. 19. Coloss. iii. 16.

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been introduced into churches, about the middle of the seventh, by others, not till the eleventh or twelfth century; since which time this kind of music has made a part in the Christian service[i].

With us of the church of England, indeed, it ceased for a short period in the last century. By the sectaries of that day, organs were holden in abomination; and the fury of an enthusiastic zeal, which seems to have been DEAF as well as BLIND, destroyed many capital instruments. It is observable, however, of Milton, though so warmly engaged against the church, that his taste got the better of his prejudices; for, in one of his smaller poems, he speaks of cathedral service—as it ought to be spoken of—and in a manner truly worthy of himself[k]. It is much to the honour of the members of the kirk of Scotland, that many of them have lately subscribed liberally towards the erection of an episcopal chapel,

[i] See Bingham. b. viii. ch. vii. sect. 14.

[k] But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.

There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

Il Penseroso.

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with an organ, at Edinburgh. The votaries of presbytery not only bear the sound of the organ, but, I believe, have adopted it in some of their own places of worship in England. O might all their other prejudices in our disfavour die away and vanish in like manner!

The objections, in short, of any account, urged against choral music, are pointed at the abuse which has been sometimes made of it, and to which, like other good things, it is at all times liable. Great care should, therefore, be taken to keep the style of it chaste and pure, suitable to holy places and divine subjects. "Religious harmony," says Collier, "must be moving, but noble withal; "grave, solemn, and seraphic; fit for a martyr to "play, and an angel to hear." The light movements of the theatre, with the effeminate and frittered music of modern Italy, should be excluded, and such composers as Tallis and Bird, Gibbons and King, Purcel and Blow, Croft and Clark, Wise and Weldon, Green and Handel, should be considered (and it is hoped they always will be considered) as our English classics in this sacred science[1]. Nothing

[1] The science of Music was ranked next to that of Theology by Luther, who is thought to have composed the notes now sung to the hundredth psalm.—On the true style and composition of music in general, and sacred music in particular, see the excellent observations made by the reverend and learned Mr. Jones, in his Treatise on the Art of Music, dedicated to the Directors of the Concerts of Ancient Music; Introduction, and occasionally through the work. The manner in which he has illustrated one science by ideas borrowed from another, in the way of analogy, shows the hand of a master.

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then can be said against it, and every thing may be said for it.

That which is commonly affirmed of nature (whatever is meant by the word) may with truth and propriety be affirmed of the God of nature, that he "doth nothing in vain." To the element of air he has given the power of producing sounds; to the ear the capacity of receiving them; and to the affections of the mind an aptness to be moved by them when transmitted through the organs of the body. The philosophy of the thing is too deep and wonderful for us; we cannot attain unto it! But such is the fact: with that we are concerned, and that is enough for us to know. The end and design of so curious an apparatus are most evident. Sound was intended to be the vehicle of sentiment, and should be employed in the conveyance of such sentiments as may instruct, improve, purify, and exalt the mind; such as, when received and retained, may inspire resolutions, and produce actions, tending to the glory of God and the good of mankind. How can this purpose be more effectually answered, than it is, when the most beautiful and sublime passages of holy writ, set to the finest music, are heard outwardly with our ears, and ingrafted inwardly in our hearts? What can we have—what can we desire more, upon earth?

The power of music is but too well known, by fatal experience, when it is misapplied—applied to cherish and call forth the evil that lies concealed in the corrupt heart of fallen man; to recommend and excite in him all the follies of levity and dissipation,

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of intemperance and wantonness. What are we to do in this case? Are we to renounce and disclaim music? No; let us employ music against music. If the Philistines sing a chorus in honour of their idol, let Israelites sing one louder to the glory of Jehovah[m]. In the heathen mythology we are told, that when the Sirens warbled the soft seducing strains, to allure heedless mortals into the paths of unlawful pleasure, two different methods were made use of to escape the snare. Some rendered themselves incapable of hearing, while others overpowered their songs by chanting divine hymns. The story is fabulous, but the moral just, and apposite to the subject in hand. For there is no doubt but that the heart may be weaned from every thing base and mean, and elevated to every thing that is excellent and praise-worthy, by sacred music. The evil spirit may still be dispossessed, and the good spirit invited and obtained, by the harp of the son of Jesse.

Talk we of LIFE, and JOY, and PLEASURE? "Thou, O Lord, shall show us the path of LIFE; "in thy presence is the fulness of JOY, and at thy "right hand is PLEASURE for evermore[n]."

Are we at any time heavy and sluggish? Does religion seem dull, prayer a task, and thanksgiving a burden? "Awake up, my glory; awake, lute and "harp!—I will praise thee, O Lord, among the peo-"ple; I will sing unto thee among the nations.

[m] This is done in the Oratorio of Samson.

[n] Psal. xvi. 11. Set full by Goldwin, and a charming duet by Dr. Blake.

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"For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and t
"truth unto the clouds. Set up thyself, O G
"above the heavens, and thy glory above all t
"earth[o]."

Have we a turn to ingratitude? Are we dispos
to forget the mercies we have received?—"I a
"well pleased that the Lord hath heard the voice
"my prayer; that he hath inclined his ear unto m
"therefore will I call upon him as long as I live[p]

Is the strong man tempted to glory in his strengt
the great man in his power, the rich man in his pc
sessions, or the fair woman in the beauty and grac
fulness of her person?—"As for man, his days a
"as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourishet
"For the wind passeth over it—it is gone—and tl
"place thereof shall know it no more[q]."

Are we captivated by any thing we see or he
below, and induced to esteem it GREAT?—"I w
"in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard
"great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Ha
"lelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honour, an
"power, unto the Lord our God; for true an
"righteous are his judgements. And again they sai
"Hallelujah. And the four-and-twenty elders, an
"the four living creatures fell down, and worshippe
"God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Hall
"lujah. And a voice came out of the throne, sa
"ing, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and y

[o] Psal. lvii. 8, &c. Set by Wise.

[p] Psal. cxvi. 1. Set by Dean Aldrich, from Carissimi,

[q] Psal. ciii. 15. Set by Clark.

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"that fear him both small and great. And I heard "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as "the voice of many waters, and as the voice of "mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah, for the "Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, "and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the mar-"riage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made "herself ready[r]."

Before such a scene and such a band, every human performance must shrink and fade away in the comparison. A performance, however, has lately been exhibited, and, to our honour, has been exhibited in Britain[s]—(its sound still vibrates in the ears of many who hear me) which furnished the best idea we shall ever obtain on earth of what is passing in heaven. It did justice (and that is saying very much indeed) to a composition of the great master, to which may be applied the observation of a learned writer upon a chorus in an anthem penned by the same hand, that "nothing less is suggested by it to "the imagination, than all the powers of the universe "associated in the worship of its Creator[t]."

Music, then, has always been used in the church, and with good reason. May it always continue to be so used, and to produce its proper effects! In England, choral service was first introduced in this

[r] Rev. xix. 1, &c. Set by Blow, in a strain of sublimity truly wonderful.

[s] Commemoration of Handel in Westminster Abbey.

[t] Sir John Hawkins, v. 416.

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cathedral[u], and the practice of it long confined to the churches of Kent, from whence it became gradually diffused over the whole kingdom. Here may it breathe its last—but not till time shall expire with the world! Violated no more by sacrilegious hands, may this august and magnificent fabric remain, in perfect beauty, through all the generations of mankind that are yet to come, a monument of the piety of our ancestors, and a witness to that of our posterity! May thanksgiving and the voice of melody, like that of this day, be evermore heard in it, till the veil being done away which parts the visible from the invisible world, the choirs of heaven and earth shall unite before the throne.

[u] Sir John Hawkins, i. 404, 371.—We are informed by Strype, in his Annals of the Reformation, vol. ii. p. 314, that when queen Elizabeth was entertained at Canterbury by archbishop Parker, the French ambassador, who was in her suite, hearing the excellent music in the cathedral church, extolled it to the sky, and brake out into these words: "O God, I think no prince be-"side in all Europe ever heard the like, no, not our holy father "the Pope himself."—May we not say, that to cathedrals, and the persons teaching and taught in them, has been owing the preservation of music among us from age to age?

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DISCOURSE III.

THE CHARACTER OF TRUE WISDOM, AND THE MEANS OF OBTAINING IT.

PROVERBS, IV. 7.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and, with all thy getting, get understanding.

THE sage instructor of the world, from the eminence on which Providence had placed him, surveys mankind. Discontented with themselves and their present condition, he beholds them engaged in the pursuit of something that still flies before them. Pleasure, wealth, and power appear in their view, and solicit their attention. Grieved to see time misspent in quest of things perishable, and labour lost on that which either may not be obtained, or, when obtained, may disappoint in enjoyment all the hopes excited by expectation, he raises his voice, and wishes it to be heard to the ends of the earth. He calls men off from a fruitless chase after objects attained with difficulty, and possessed without satisfaction; he points out one adequate to all their efforts; one in the pursuit of which no time can be misspent, no labour can be lost; one which presents itself a fair mark, to be always hit by the quick eye

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and the steady hand; one that may be surely gain by genius and diligence, and, when gained, is pı ductive of pleasure, riches, and honour; pleasu which fadeth not away, riches which none can ta from the happy possessor, and the honour whi cometh from God only. Solomon found, if m were disposed to be contented with any thing, it w that with which they never should be contented their ignorance. He exhorts them to LEAR "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get w "dom: and, with all thy getting, get understan "ing."

The subject will best be laid before you, in i several branches, by considering WHAT it is we a enjoined to acquire, HOW we are to acquire it, aı WHY we are to acquire it.

First, then, we will consider the nature of th which we are so earnestly enjoined to acquire.

It would be tedious, and it is needless, critical to discuss the signification, and nicely to trace tl shades, which discriminate the meaning of the diffe ent words employed in the book of Proverbs; su as, "wisdom, understanding, knowledge, prudenc "discretion," and the rest. They seem often to l used promiscuously. So far, at least, as relates our present purpose, and the institution which is tl occasion of our assembling at this time, they ma certainly be regarded as terms nearly synonymou and intended to convey the idea now generally expres ed by the word LEARNING. The wisdom of Solomoı we know, extended itself on every side; it was coı versant in matters physical and theological, natur

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and artificial; it investigated and stated the duties and offices of man, political, domestic, and personal; it contemplated him in the several relations and employments of life, and prescribed the conduct respectively proper in each. And this surely is true wisdom; this is the end of all learning. Philosophy, the result of sagacity, reading, and experience, lays down rules and maxims; history furnishes examples; and the system of nature, with the inventions and improvements of art, supplies images and illustrations.

A distinction has been made between divine and human learning, and much has been written upon it. The former has by some been magnified to the contempt and exclusion of the latter, as if that ought not to be brought into the sanctuary; as if any great quantity of it were not only useless but prejudicial; as if science were the death of goodness, and ignorance indeed the mother of devotion. On the other hand, there are who pretty plainly intimate, that they think the name of learning due only to that which we style human; religion, in their opinion, being calculated to engage the attention of none but those whose abilities qualify them not for scholars. In the first of these representations there is a want of judgement; in the second, of piety. The two species of learning differ; but they differ as the MEANS do from the END. Were there no divine learning, human learning would lose great part of its value: limited to the present life, it must terminate on the confines of the grave. And had we no human learning, we should not be able to attain to that which is divine. The days of inspiration have

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been long since at an end. God has ceased to communicate immediately the treasures of wisdom and knowledge to any man. Modern pretensions to such communications betray some fault either in the hearts or heads of those who make them. These treasures must be sought for, with the blessing of God upon our endeavours, in the ordinary way. All the divine learning upon earth is contained in the books of the Old and New Testament, which are written in Hebrew and Greek. Those languages, therefore, with the Latin, must be studied; and the study of them falls within the department of human learning.

Enough, perhaps it will be urged, may be gathered from translations, for all the purposes required. But to whom are we indebted for translations, unless to those who by good and sufficient learning became qualified for the work? And as they, however worthy and able, were yet very far from infallible, it will frequently happen, in points of difficulty, that we can neither sufficiently establish our own faith, nor confute the arguments of the adversary, without recurring to the originals. The adversary, to serve his turn, will recur to them; and what will become of us, if we are not able to follow him?

The history of the people of God cannot be understood, without taking with us that of pagan states, particularly of the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. An exact acquaintance with what has been passing in the world since the extinction of the last, cannot be dispensed with in a commentator on the prophecies, particularly those in the Revelation. To adjust the situation of places and the

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succession of times, we must call to our assistance the sciences of geography, chronology, and astronomy. Nor can the proportions of the temple and its furniture, described in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and afterwards referred to by Ezekiel and St. John, be well comprehended and ascertained, without something of mathematics and mechanics. Thus necessary is a knowledge of languages and sciences to interpret the letter of Scripture, the source of doctrines and precepts, the foundation of all improvements, moral and spiritual; and they must ever be the best interpreters who have the largest share of it. The advantages of a superior skill in the Greek language, as exercised on passages in the New Testament and the early ecclesiastical writers, has been eminently displayed in a controversy now subsisting, the subject of which is of the highest importance.

Less, indeed, of human learning was needed by the clergy when the world around them had none, as was the case in the dark ages preceding the reformation. To the clergy, however, of those very ages are unbelievers indebted for the preservation of that learning which, since the reformation, they have employed in vain against Christianity. From the clergy in modern times have proceeded nine in ten of the books written to facilitate the progress of literature, and disseminate every species of it through the world[a]. Enemies to false philosophy, they have ever proved themselves the

[a] See the late Dr. Jortin's admirable Charge, upon the subject, at the end of his Sermons.

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friends and promoters of that which is true. Yet certain author having very innocently mentioned "
"philosophical divine," as a character that migl be supposed to exist, without any contradiction in plied, the historian of the Roman empire is please to represent such a supposed being as a STRANG CENTAUR[b], a composition absurd and monstrou half man and half brute. According to his ow ideas, however, the representation may be jus enough; for a philosopher, as we have too muc reason to apprehend, in his acceptation of the word is an unbeliever; a divine is (and, let us hope, wil always continue to be) a believer. Wisdom, i seems, was born with the infidel, and will die wit him. We will take the liberty, notwithstanding, t say—because it is true—that whatever learning ma at any time have been brought to the attack, ther has never hitherto been found a deficiency of it fo the defence of religion; neither will there be foun any such deficiency, we trust, in time to come while our schools and universities, (chiefly under th management and direction of clergymen) shall con tinue to exist and flourish. From considering th nature of that wisdom we are in the text exhorte to acquire, this leads us to bestow some reflections,

Secondly, on the best method of acquiring it.

Learning is that which may be learned. As wis dom is not communicated by inspiration, so neithe is it born with us. We come into the world withou principles of any kind, because without ideas of an kind. This opinion was long controverted, as bein

[b] Vol. ii. p. 369.

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thought to militate against religion. But the apprehension appears to have been groundless. The doctrine is established, and religion has received no detriment.

It is still, nevertheless, imagined that a man may make wonderful discoveries by the exercise of his own powers. But the first step in the process has been sometimes unaccountably overlooked. It has been forgotten, that those powers must be elicited and formed by cultivation; that every man must be taught by some one how to use them, or that he will discover nothing. A truth, when it has been proposed and explained to us, appears clear and evident; all the truths contained in the propositions of Euclid appear so: but surely it follows not that, without information, we should have discovered them, or have once thought concerning them. This is a fallacy, by which mankind of late have been greatly misled. No instance can be produced, from Adam to the present hour, of a single human being, brought up apart from all instructors, who ever spoke or reasoned. The state indeed is unnatural, and one into which man cannot fall but by accident. In the common course of things, Providence has been pleased to ordain that he should be born in society, and have those about him, who never fail to teach him as much as they themselves know; their language, and the notions current among them. These he learns; and if he be taught no more, he knows no more.

Our countrymen sent, in quest of a new continent, to visit the extremities of the old ones, and

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the distant isles of the South Sea, have return with accounts which confirm what has been sa and may serve to convince us, "that man is bor as the Scripture expresses it, "like a wild as "colt[c];" and, without education, will continue suc that he is born with capabilities only, and is in real what he is made by instruction. These accour should produce in us a sentiment of pity for our f low-creatures, whose condition is so truly deplorab and one at the same time of gratitude to our h venly Father, who has cast our lot in a fairer grou Some modern philosophers seem to think the roc of Patagonia, and the deserts of New Zealand, be the only schools in which human nature can studied to advantage. But surely we might as w expect a statuary to accomplish himself in his a by looking all day at a block of marble, because o of that block a statue may be formed. Shall judge of a plant, by contemplating the seed fr which it is to spring? No: let us view the tree, root fixed in the earth, and drawing moisture fr beneath; its trunk fully grown, its branches expa ed, and drinking in the dew of heaven from abo the whole invested with its foliage as a beautiful g ment, and crowned with its fruit in the season. I us not frame our ideas of human nature by surv ing an infant or a savage. Show us the man co pletely formed and perfected by a liberal, a learn and a religious education.

From the mountains of Switzerland a voice h

[c] Job, xi. 12.

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been heard, proclaiming that we are all mistaken; and that to teach (in matters of religion and morality) is to prejudice; and, therefore, infuse, says this philosopher, no principles into the minds of youth; let them adopt their own when they come to years of discretion.

But still, it is an indisputable fact, that men must learn: and they who do not learn betimes, will learn with far more difficulty, when advanced in years. The soil stiffens and hardens by continuing untilled. The ground must be broken up, and good seed must be sown, by him who expects to see valleys covered over with corn at the time of harvest. Weeds and thistles only will be the spontaneous and unhappy produce. If children are not early conducted into the paths of truth and virtue, they will be found, at a maturer age, in those of error and vice. We cannot, I am afraid, prevail upon the world, the flesh, and the devil, to stand neuter, during the experiment; an experiment which whoever shall make once, without pretending to the spirit of prophecy, we may venture to predict, will find no encouragement to make it again. The truth is, we must teach children the best we can while they are young, leaving them to alter and correct afterwards, if they shall see occasion. The nature of the thing admits of no other method consistent with the dictates of reason and common sense.

Instruction being thus necessary, we are to consider through what hands it may be most advantageously conveyed. Through those, perhaps it will be said, of the parents. One should certainly imagine

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so at first sight. But then, all parents are not able to instruct, having not been themselves sufficiently instructed. Those of them who are able, may not be willing to submit to the task; while many, both able and willing, cannot find leisure from their necessary business to undertake it. The fault of Mr. Locke's treatise is, that it supposes none of these cases to happen, but that a father shall always be at liberty to take care of his son's education. The same fault is chargeable on the plan of a very sensible and agreeable instructress of a neighbouring kingdom. With great force of genius and goodness of heart, she describes two persons of noble birth as giving up the world, and retiring, for a course of years, from public life, that they might devote their time and fortune to the education of their children [d]. Undoubtedly, the design is praise-worthy. They were excellently well employed. Would to God, that many of their rank were so employed in every kingdom upon earth. But all cannot do it; the scheme can never become general.

There is, besides, another difficulty in the way. The partiality and fondness of the tutor, when that tutor is a father, may often do the pupil an injury, the effects of which will go with him through life. To prevent this, the Spartans, by a law of the state, took children, at a certain age, out of the hands of their parents, and placed them under other masters. The Hebrews had their schools of the prophets, the Greeks and Romans their academies and gymnasia;

[d] Theodore et Adele, par M. la Comptesse de Genlis.

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and since the revival of learning in these latter days, the western world has abounded with schools and universities; of which, without incurring the charge of self-adulation, we may truly say, none have exceeded those in our own country.

In a public education, the means and instruments necessary for the acquisition of learning are possessed in a more full and complete manner. The master can give his time and his thoughts wholly to the work. Constant and long experience confers a degree of skill not otherwise to be attained. A spirit of emulation is excited in the scholar, who goes on with more sprightliness and alacrity in the company of his school-fellows, forgetting those that are behind, and pressing forward to those who are before, with the determination of a Cæsar, that nothing is yet done while any thing remains to be done. A regular succession of business at stated times inures him to live by rule, and forbids him to be idle; while the discipline by which it is enforced, renders him healthy and hardy in mind and body. By being put so soon to manage and bustle for himself, he is prepared for the world into which he must enter, and in which he must pass his days: the various tempers and disposi tions of his numerous companions bring him acquaint ed with those of mankind, among whom he is to pass them: and he forms connexions, which by banishing selfishness, by exchanging offices of friendship by mutual assistance and communication of studies, as well as in many other ways, contribute towards his passing them with pleasure and emolument. If all who are engaged in the superintendence of our pub-

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lic seminaries could only bestow equal attentio
the learning and morals of those under their c
so that they might go forth (and such, you wil
bear me witness, have lately gone forth from he
good MEN as well as good SCHOLARS, the dis
between the patrons of public and private e
cation would be, perhaps, in great measure, a
end.

Respecting the method of school instruction
present in use amongst us, it is one which has b
long tried, and found successful; witness those g
and shining characters, formed under its auspi
which adorn our annals; nor have its adversa
yet been able to propose another, liable, upon
whole, to fewer objections.

The observations made by an excellent writer
the plan proposed by the great Milton, are too va
able not to be recited to you upon the present
casion:—

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, "was
"teach something more solid than the common lit
"ature of schools, by reading those authors t
"treat of physical subjects, such as the Geor
"and astronomical treatises of the ancients. E
"the truth is, that the knowledge of external natu
"and of the sciences which that knowledge requi
"or includes, is not the great or the frequent bu
"ness of the human mind. Whether we provi
"for action or conversation, whether we wish to
"useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religio
"and moral knowledge of right and wrong: the ne
"is an acquaintance with the history of mankin

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"and with those examples which may be said to em-
"body truth, and prove by events the reasonable-
"ness of opinions. Prudence and justice are vir-
"tues of all times, and of all places; we are per-
"petually moralists, but we are geometricians only
"by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual na-
"ture is necessary; our speculations upon matter
"are voluntary and at leisure. Physical knowledge
"is of such rare emergence, that one man may know
"another half his life, without being able to estimate
"his skill in hydrostatics or astronomy; but his
"moral and prudential character immediately ap-
"pears. Those authors therefore are to be read at
"schools, that supply most axioms of prudence,
"most principles of moral truth, and most materials
"for conversation: and these purposes are best an-
"swered by poets, orators, and historians[e]."

Some have thought that, as we are now furnished with translations of the ancient classical authors, we may spare ourselves the trouble of learning their languages.—Were the question only concerning matters of fact, it might be deemed perhaps of little importance to consider by what means we come at the knowledge of them, so that we do but obtain the truth; though, by the way, whether in particular instances we have obtained it, can often only be known (as was observed before in the case of the Scriptures) by consulting the originals. But there is much more in the matter. The writers of Greece and Rome are our masters in style and composition;

[e] Dr. Johnson in his Life of Milton, p. 142.

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with relation to which, the spirit of every piece will evaporate in the transfusion. Next in value to knowledge, is the mode of communicating it with ease and propriety. They who have studied the best writers of antiquity with this view, will always themselves be the best writers in any other language. When these shall cease to be regarded as our models, elegant simplicity and manly energy will give place to a false glare of affectation and refinement: loose and licentious tenets will be tricked out in the meretricious garb of false eloquence. A vitiated taste in writing, like that which preceded the decline and downfall of the Roman empire, will precede our own. Tacitus and Seneca will be imitated, rather than Cæsar and Cicero; epithet, point, and antithesis will prevail; and we shall prepare for slavery, by "babbling a dialect of France."

Nothing could tend more to accelerate a catastrophe of this kind than the adoption of that system of foppery and immorality recommended by a late noble author, enamoured, almost to distraction, of the language and manners of our neighbours upon the continent. Learning and religion would then no longer make a part in the education of our youth. One would be banished under the notion of pedantry, the other excluded by the name of superstition. Travel and a knowledge of the world, it seems, may supply the place of both. To know the world, is doubtless expedient; in some circumstances necessary. But a man should know many other things before he enters upon that study, or he will do well not to enter upon it at all. Let him lay in a stock, and

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that no moderate one, of useful learning and sound principles, ere he set out upon his travels; or he will be little the better for having seen the world, though the world may be somewhat the merrier for having seen him. If he go out an ignoramus, he will come home a profligate, with the atheist ingrafted upon the blockhead. As to the business of the graces—before the gloss can be given, a substance must be prepared to receive it; and solid bodies take the brightest polish.

From what has been said, you will perhaps be induced to think that, in times like these, and in a matter of such importance, projects of innovation are dangerous things. We know what we are to lose; let us be well informed what we are to gain; lest we should be led to exchange an old system with some defects, for a new one with many more; defects which are of little consequence, for defects which are of very great consequence indeed to the general state of learning, and the constitution of our country. Reformation was the word in the last century; and one was at length effected which swept away schools and universities, with the government civil and ecclesiastical. The revenues allotted to the support of cathedrals and these their appendages, were seized, with a view to augment the smaller livings. But mark the event—When the estates were sold, the presbyterian ministers, who had taken possession of the livings, and expected the augmentation, were told, to their utter astonishment, that the money was wanted to support public credit. It was wanted, and it was applied accord-

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ingly[f].—All was then overwhelmed by a deluge enthusiasm and illiterate fanaticism. The del which now threatens us is one of another kind, but a whit less formidable.

Thus much for the wisdom we are exhorted to quire, and the method of acquiring it. A few wo shall be said, and they shall be but few, in the

Third and last place, upon the advantages atte ing such acquisition to the individual himself, and the community.

To the individual, wisdom is indeed, as Solon properly styles it, "the principal thing." The seat its residence is in the noblest part of the hum composition; and that noble part it renders still m noble. What else gives to man the superiority o brutes; to angels over man; and to the Omnisci over all his creatures? "The Lord is a God "knowledge[g];" and wisdom was with him fr eternity[h].

The pleasures of wisdom exceed all others, in kir degree, and duration, far as heaven is higher th earth. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, a "all her paths are peace.[i]" A studious dispositi makes those who are blessed with it valuable, goc and happy. It enables them to find a paradise solitude, and profitably, as well as agreeably, to f up the intervals of business. It renders them lit

[f] See Warner's Ecclesiastical History, ii. 580. Collier, 848. Nelson, ii. 291.

[g] Sam. ii. 3. [h] Prov. viii. 22. Wisdom, ix. 9.

[i] Prov. iii. 17.

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sensible to the allurements of external objects, to those trifles and improprieties which disgrace the man, and degrade the Christian. The ill instructed and unemployed are the persons whose imagination is always wandering and afloat. For want of solid nourishment, their curiosity and their appetites turn to objects either vain or dangerous; and hence proceed all those inventions for squandering away thought and time, which generally end in a forgetfulness of God and ourselves. It is incredible what inconveniences are avoided by those, who can pass their vacant hours with books and their own thoughts. "Happy"—says a prelate, in his day, the admiration and delight of mankind, I mean the all-accomplished archbishop of Cambray—"Happy they, "who are disgusted with violent pleasures, and know "how to be pleased with the sweets of an innocent "life. Happy they who delight in instruction, and "find a satisfaction in cultivating their minds with "knowledge. Into whatever situation adverse for-"tune may throw them, they always carry enter-"tainment with them; and the disquiet which preys "on others in the midst of pleasures, is unknown to "those who can employ themselves in reading. Hap-"py they who love to read[k]." Let it be added, that this happiness is one which, as the world does not give, so neither can the world take away. It will never leave us, but continue a fast and firm friend, when every other pleasure shall have forsaken

[k] Telemachus, b. ii. See Phillips on the Study of Sacred Literature, p. 172.

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us. Wisdom will comfort us in the day of so
and support us in the hour of death. Like the
ark accompanying the camp of Israel, she wi
with us over Jordan, and conduct us to our inl
ance in the land of promise. "Exalt her,"
the wise man, in the words immediately follo
my text—"Exalt her, and she shall promote t
"she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost
"brace her; she shall give to thine head an c
"ment of grace, a crown of glory shall she de
"to thee."

To a community the advantages of wisdom
many and great. A nation glories not less in
learning, than in the valour, of her sons. Long
illustrious is the train of literary heroes w
Britain beholds with an honest and conscious p
who from age to age have filled the most exa
stations in church and state, or presided in the di
ent departments of science, or, from the shade
an honourable and lettered retirement, sent forth t
writings for the entertainment and instruction
mankind.

My younger brethren, the hope of the rising
neration, our future joy and crown, all these v
men like yourselves, trained in the same course
education. Think of their examples, and emu
their fame. The trophies of Miltiades, you kn
would not suffer Themistocles to sleep. Hear
author of the book of Ecclesiasticus upon this s
ject, in a chapter read constantly at our unive
ties on the days appointed for a solemn commer
ration of founders and benefactors: "Let us n

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"praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. "The Lord hath wrought great glory by them "through his great power from the beginning. Such as "did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for "their power, giving counsel for their understand-"ing, and declaring prophecies: leaders of the people "by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learn-"ing meet for the people; wise and eloquent in "their instructions. All these were honoured in "their generations, and were the glory of their "times. Their bodies are buried in peace, but "their names live for evermore." While the world shall last, and any regard be paid to that which deserves regard, "the people will tell of their "wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their "praise[l]."

If, therefore, there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things, meditate on them, give yourselves wholly to them. Time is on the wing. It flies, to return no more. Seize the moments as they pass, and employ them to the best advantage. Lose not the golden opportunity, the sweet hour of prime, the morning of youth, health, and strength. Conquer the difficulties at first setting out, and all will be pleasure ever after. Labour now, and comfortable will be your rest when the season of labour shall be over. "For glorious "is the fruit of labour, and the root of wisdom "shall never fall away[m]." Let the sanctity of your manners keep pace with the improvement of your

[l] Ecclus. xliv. [m] Wisdom, iii. 15.

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minds. To your governors be respectful and
dient; to your companions, gentle and loving
all, courteous and obliging. And that the di
blessing may be upon you in what you do, rem
ber to begin and end your studies with prayer.
" any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Go
Let him ask THAT, as the Son of David did,
all things else, judged proper for him, shall
added to it[o]. Pray, therefore, that God wo
" give you wisdom that sitteth by his throne,
" reject you not from among his children: that
" would send her out of his holy heavens, and fr
" the throne of his glory, that being present,
" may labour with you, that you may know what
" pleasing unto him. For she knoweth and und
" standeth all things, and she shall lead you sobe
" in your doings, and preserve you by her pow
" So shall your works be acceptable[p]" in the sig
of heaven and earth, bringing glory to God, cre
to your instructors, comfort to your friends, hono
to yourselves, and benefit to your country.

[n] James, i. 5. [o] 1 Kings, iii. 11. [p] Wisdom, ix. 4. 10, &c.

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DISCOURSE IV.

THE PRAISE OF GOD PERFECTED OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES AND SUCKLINGS.

PSALM, XXXIV. 11.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

IT is one mark of that wisdom by which the world is governed, that the assistance afforded is proportioned to the necessities of the times wherein such assistance is called for. When the darkness which covers a land becomes so thick as to make men despair of its removal, light shall suddenly arise from an unexpected quarter; small indeed, and scarce discernible, at first; but gently and gradually increasing, till the darkness vanishes, and the perfect day is formed. When corruption of one kind or other has in such a manner overspread the face of religion, that its features are scarcely any longer to be distinguished, a reforming hand shall appear, to do away the soil contracted in a course of ages, and restore the picture to its original beauty.

If a preacher mentions the *iniquity of the age*, it is regarded by many as a sort of cant; as a neces-

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sary ingredient in the composition of a sermon we are asked, if we think nations have not as bad formerly? Undoubtedly many have; which reason, God destroyed them, and raise others to supply their places. In the days of N and in those of Lot, men were as wicked as the now: they were more so; for a flood came them in one case, a storm of fire and brimstoı the other. And whenever we shall be altogether them (which God forbid we ever should be), ju ment, in some shape, will seize upon us. " " kingdom of God shall be taken from us, and g " to a nation that will bring forth the fruits there Such is the rule of Heaven's proceedings, and it a eth not. We are not yet overthrown, because measure is not yet filled up; but if we conti daily employed in filling it, that measure mus time be full.

The matter is however, of late, " come hom " our business and our bosoms." A lawless trib profligate, desperate, unfeeling villains have brol loose upon the public, to rob, to maim, and to m der; so that we can no longer travel with comf upon the road, or sleep with security in our be Numbers of these wretches are from time to ti apprehended, and crowded together in prisons; fr whence some come forth again to make fresh rava in society, tenfold more the children of hell (if pos ble) than they went in; while others furnish c mournful and horrible executions of twenty or thir at a time, to the astonishment of the kingdoms arou us, and our own shame and confusion of face. Ho

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happens it, say foreigners to our countrymen, when upon their travels abroad—how happens it, that under a constitution, of which you boast as the glory of the world, monthly scenes are exhibited which would shock the minds of Turks and Tartars? This is a question more easily asked than answered. The fact, alas! is certain; and even the public prints begin to exclaim, that there is no police amongst us, no remedy for these disorders, and, in short, that all is over.

But let us not by any means despair. This would only make bad worse. If we once bring ourselves to fancy that no remedy can be found, no remedy ever will be found, for none will ever be sought.

Dark as the prospect was, a ray of light has broken in upon it, and that from an unexpected quarter. An institution has been set on foot by a private individual [a], to the excellency of which every man who loves his country must rejoice to bear his testimony. From small beginnings it has increased, and diffused itself in a wonderful manner; and if it be generally taken up through the kingdom, especially in the metropolis, with the same zeal and judgement which have been shown in the management of it among you, the sagacity of the wisest cannot foresee how much good may in the end be done by it, and how far it may go towards saving a great people from impending ruin. At the moment in which I am speaking, not less than one hundred thousand pupils are said to be in training under its care. There may soon be ten times

[a] Mr. Raikes, of Gloucester.

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that number; and if it finally succeed with half t
five hundred thousand honest men and virtuous
men, duly mingled in the mass of the commu
will make a great alteration. In the case of goo
well as bad, "a little leaven (and this can hardl
"called a little) leaveneth the whole lump."

The institution intended, as you all well kno
that of SUNDAY SCHOOLS, which seems to ado
itself to the parties concerned in the words of
text, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I
"teach you the fear of the Lord."

The persons to be taught under this institutio
children.

It is a great happiness that men, in their pre
state, are not immortal. An evil generation pa
away; and therefore, if proper care be taken, it
be succeeded by a good one. Else were the cas
the world lamentable indeed. With old offen
little can be done. Hard labour, spare diet,
above all, solitude, might do something; and
experiment, it is greatly hoped, will be made.
in general, if the husbandman has in vain dug at
the trees in his garden, and taken every other
necessary for their improvement; his method
be, to train up younger and better plants, wh
may answer the end of their plantation, and b
fruit, when the others shall no longer be suffere
cumber the ground.

The children proposed to be instructed are th
of the poor.

Of every community, as it has pleased God
ordain in the present constitution of things, the p

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must always form a very considerable majority. The necessities of mankind could never else be supplied; for the rich will not labour; but they are constrained to pay those who, for their own and the common good, can and will labour. In return for these services, the rich, if they were wise, should do every thing in their power to make and to keep the poor honest, virtuous, and religious; to instruct, or procure them to be instructed, in the knowledge and practice of their duty to God and man; more especially, to set them a proper example. This, I say, would be to act the part of wise men, as well as good men. For when the religious principle is once perished and gone in the poor, human laws will lose their effect, and be set at naught.

I will mention a remarkable instance of this, well attested. A servant, who had made the improvement that might be expected from hearing the irreligious and blasphemous conversation continually passing at the table where it was his place to wait[b], took an opportunity to rob his master. Being apprehended, and urged to give a reason for this infamous behaviour, "Sir," said he, "I had heard you so "often talk of the impossibility of a future state, and "that after death there was no reward for virtue nor "punishment for vice, that I was tempted to com-"mit the robbery." "Well but," replied the master, "had you no fear of that death which the laws "of your country inflict upon the crime?" "Sir,"

[b] The table was that of the late Mr. Mallet. The fact is related by Davies in his Life of Garrick, vol. ii. p. 59.

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rejoined the servant, looking sternly at his mas
" what is that to you if I had a mind to venture th
" You had removed my greatest terror; why sho
" I fear the less?"

Behold the wisdom of propagating infidelity a
atheism in a nation! As the middle and lower ord
of mankind are always ready to imitate the behavi
of their betters, this is one woful specimen, amo
millions, of the manner in which the general corru
tion of faith and morals has descended, and infect
the world. We must now, therefore, take up the m
ter at the other end, and try, if by reforming t
poor, we cannot shame the rich into better manne
and better principles. And for our encouragemen
in opposition to the instance of a master perverti
his servant, let us recollect that mentioned in th
Scriptures of a female servant, who waited on th
wife of Naaman, a general officer of the Syrians, an
converted her master to the worship and belief o
the God of Israel[c]. To the poor the Gospel wa
at first preached: to the poor let it still be preached
The rich must do as they please; but for the promo
tion of their interest, temporal and eternal, the
cannot do better, than to believe and practise i
themselves, and to see that every body belonging to
them does the same. God defend all masters from
free-thinking servants! and all servants from free
thinking masters!

The foregoing considerations have been of a more
general nature. It is time now to note the peculiari-

[c] 2 Kings, v. 2.

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ties which distinguish the institution of SUNDAY SCHOOLS, and recommend them to particular notice and encouragement. These have already been set forth to great advantage by a worthy clergyman in our neighbourhood[d]. I have only to draw his arguments to a point, and state them in as concise a manner to you as I am able, adding withal what may have occurred to myself in the way of confirmation or illustration.

It is to be observed, then, first, that when the managers of all other charitable foundations have done their best, numbers of children must still be left in ignorance, being employed from morning to evening, during six days of the week, and all little enough to earn the bread they are to eat. Their case therefore is desperate, unless we contrive to give them on a Sunday that instruction which they can obtain on no other day.

II. By appropriating the charitable fund to the use of Sunday alone, numbers may be comprehended (perhaps all the poor children in a place) who stand in need of such assistance: whereas a very few only could be benefited, at the same expense, for the whole week.

III. Sunday being a day of rest from the labour of the hands, from worldly business of all sorts (for such it ought to be among Christians), we are the more at liberty to employ it in the opening of the

[d] The Rev. Mr. Moore, of Boughton Blean, in his Sermon on the subject, and the excellent and very useful Appendix subjoined to it.

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understanding and improvement of the heart, w
is the proper employment of the day. And ble
are they who do so employ the hours which rec
after the attendance on public worship is over.
of the great lights of the law, in the last century, I
Chief Justice Hale, went so far as to say, and
left it upon record, in his instructions to his child
that he never failed to experience the kindly influe
of a well-spent Sunday, on the business of the
ceeding week. He supposed (and I know of
good reason to be given why we should suppose otl
wise) that, by the devout exercises of such a Sunc
the mind and the temper were formed and prepa
to encounter the fatigues and difficulties which mi
occur; as also, that the favour of Heaven was a
tural consequence of having kept its commandme
Give me leave, therefore, to take this opportunity
entreating you to consider, whether the face of thi
would not be very soon and very much altered for
better among us, if each master of a family sho
resolve to institute a kind of SUNDAY SCHOOL (i
may so speak) in his own house, and dedicate t
evening of the Lord's day to the instruction of
children and his servants in matters of religion. I a
not pleading for a Jewish or a puritanical sabba
for a sour face or an ill temper*. But it seems re
sonable, that one evening, at least, out of seve
should be given to this good and necessary work, a

* On the design of the Christian sabbath, and the proper ma
ner of observing it, see a very sensible letter in the Supplem
to the Gentleman's Magazine for the year 1785, p. 1020.

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that Sunday evening should be fixed upon; for unless some time be fixed upon, the work will never be done at all. A man may live fifty years, perhaps, without once recollecting, that it is his duty to take this care of the household over which it has pleased God to place him.

IV. By a SUNDAY SCHOOL a number of children are kept out of harm's way; they are collected together, and inured to early and regular habits of attendance on God's worship; they are instructed in what is right; they are enabled to employ well their leisure hours when they grow up, and teach others after them to do the same. Let me say, that these are very great points gained indeed! For though the observation be trite, it is true, and cannot be too often repeated; that most of those unhappy wretches who suffer for their crimes, when they come to confession, charge their destruction upon the manner in which in the days of their youth they misspent Sunday, while their neighbours were at church. And how can it be otherwise? What wonder that they should turn out bad, who constantly missed the opportunities (the only ones, it may be, which they had) of becoming good? The thing speaks itself. And in confirmation of what was said above respecting families, let it here be added, that more young people of either sex, servants especially, are ruined by being permitted to wander abroad, instead of being well employed at home on a Sunday evening, than on any other. The reason again is plain; because on that evening, for want of the discipline in families above recommended, there is a far greater

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number of idle young people stirring, whose business is to seduce and corrupt one another. ' is the holiest of days, beyond any other, poll and profaned! " If the light that is in thee be c " ness, how great is that darkness!"

V. The children of the poor, by being drawn of their obscurity into notice and protection, are manized and civilized. They are equally surpr and pleased, on finding themselves thus regar and quickly become different creatures. Their tor has an opportunity of visiting, addressing tl according to their capacities, examining them, c mending and rewarding the good and diligent, reproving those that misbehave themselves. In tl circumstances, he is always sure of being atten to with reverence and respect, and every thing says will be minded. To form early in young mi a proper disposition towards their spiritual father teacher, is a great acquisition, which must be p ductive of the best consequences, and would of prevent some of the worst evils with which we troubled.

Lastly, let it be considered (for, though the c sideration be of a less noble kind, it is by no mea to be omitted) that by the principles of honesty a industry instilled into them, these children will disposed, in future, to provide for themselves a their families, the number of paupers will be din nished, and that heavy burthen of poors' rates lighte ed, which now threatens to overwhelm and crush t nation.

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It is hard to conceive a scheme which promises more benefit to the community. And wherever it has been tried, the expectation has been answered. Children have pressed to be admitted; when admitted, they have made due improvement; and, in some instances, have, ere long, commenced masters, and been found teaching other children at home what themselves had learned at school.

At first, it was imagined, that what was learned only on one day of the week, must needs be forgotten before that day came again. The objection seemed plausible, but the event has shown that it wanted solidity. Impressions made on one Sunday, have been found to remain on the following Sunday. We are not in general aware, how much may be done by a few hours in a week constantly employed on the same subject, especially where there is a willing mind.

Nor let us be discouraged though our endeavours may not succeed equally with all. What endeavours ever did so? What gift of God has not been bestowed on some person in vain? Rain falls on barren sandy deserts; but what would become of us, if none were therefore to fall on our fields and gardens? They must become deserts too. Nothing can be more trifling than this objection.

Another has been advanced in some of the public prints, though you will scarcely think it credible, namely, that they who teach the children are guilty of sabbath-breaking, because they work on that day for hire. Then the ministers of religion throughout the Christian world are verily guilty of sabbath-breaking, since they are paid for teaching. Were they

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not so paid, and had they no other means of getting their bread, they must all be starved.

Such are the objections which have been hitherto produced against the institution of SUNDAY SCHOOLS. If no better can be produced, it must be said, that, for all which appears, they are worthy of universal encouragement. To encourage them is to forward the great design of the Gospel, in a case which seems to admit no other method of doing it. It is done with ease; for one person can instruct many children: and it is done at an expense which is a mere trifle, compared with the expenses daily incurred in ways which afford no real comfort to the mind, on the recollection.

The institution solicits and implores, above all, the patronage and assistance of the clergy, under whose direction and superintendence, it should, if possible, be carried on. May we live to see the time when the laudable example now before our eyes shall be followed in every parish throughout the kingdom! Grateful surely must it be to angels as well as men, to behold those children behaving with reverence and devotion in the house of God, who might otherwise have been committing acts of violence or fraud without; to hear the praises of the world's Creator and Redeemer proceeding from mouths which might have been pouring forth a torrent of blasphemy or obscenity; to find a love of their duty and of their business implanted in hearts, where a love of idleness and of mischief might have taken up its abode for ever. He who does not rejoice at the prospect of such a change as this, will have difficulty

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in discovering, why the tidings of a Saviour's birth were declared by the angel, who, as at this season, announced them, to be tidings of joy. "Thou shalt "call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people" —from what?—"from their sins." To see children, therefore, wandering in darkness, ignorant of God and of Christ, reprobate to every good work and every notion of good; and to continue idle spectators of such a scene, without making those exertions which it is in our power to make—this can never be right in any of us, clergy or laity; but must contribute much to the weight of that charge which shall one day be brought against us. On the contrary, to succour those who are thus distressed for want of spiritual aid; to preserve little children in a state of innocence, or reclaim them from one of error and vice, by leading them in the ways of truth and holiness; "These," says one, who has spent his life in the service of mankind, readily and zealously giving his countenance and assistance to every scheme of piety and charity that in a long course of years has been set afoot among us, and to whom many of them owe their original[f]—"These are imperial works, and "worthy the immediate disciples of our Lord;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and ever. Amen.

[f] Jonas Hanway, Esq.

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DISCOURSE V.

THE DUTY OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.

JUDE, VER. 3.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

IT has been a doubt among expositors, whether by the terms "common salvation," and "the faith "once delivered to the saints," the apostle intended different things, or the same thing differently expressed. The latter seems most probable. "The "faith once delivered to the saints" seems necessarily to involve in it "the common salvation." But, as this is a matter of no great consequence, it shall not detain us from the consideration of that which certainly is such, the duty here so evidently enjoined of "contending for the faith." To take in the whole subject, and discuss it as fully as the time usually allowed to an exercise of this kind will permit, it may be expedient to bestow some reflections on the OBJECT to be contended for, the NECESSITY

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of contending for it, and the MANNER in which the contention should be carried on.

I. The object to be contended for is, "the faith "once delivered." A question is at present warmly agitated amongst us—What that faith is? A question somewhat extraordinary at this time of day; but certainly no trifling one; since either our opponents are guilty of degrading and dishonouring the Son of God and the Holy Spirit; or the Christian church has been guilty of idolatry from the very days of the apostles. This faith, as we say, is that system of truths revealed in the holy Scriptures concerning the dispensations of the God whom we adore, and into whose name we are baptized; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; three Persons in one God. These truths are proposed to us as the ground of our hope, our comfort, and our joy; as the principles on which the conduct of life is to be framed, accepted, and rewarded. We receive the revelation which contains the truths, upon that plenary and satisfactory evidence vouchsafed us of its authenticity; and we receive the truths which it contains, on the authority of the Revealer. There can be no better reason for receiving them, when that revealer is God. Ignorance and malice have sometimes pronounced faith to be want of sense; but surely, there is as little sense in withholding assent when it ought to be given, as in giving it when it ought to be withholden.

The different articles of our belief, dispersed in the Scriptures, were very early collected in summaries, styled Creeds, recited at baptism, and con-

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stituting thenceforth the badge and test of a man's profession[a].

By a formulary of this kind, the catechumen himself was instructed; the faith, once delivered, transmitted down to posterity; the members of the spiritual society were kept together; the doctrines by them believed and taught, made known to the world, and distinguished from a multitude of heterogeneous and erroneous opinions, by them disclaimed; a connexion with the maintainers of which would justly have brought discredit on themselves and their cause.

For these reasons, the use of creeds appears to have been at first introduced, and since continued. They who have at any time thought proper to depart from such as were established in the body to which they originally belonged, soon found it necessary to establish some of their own. The Arians, rejecting that agreed upon at Nice, drew up successively many others; I think, not fewer than seventeen in the space of forty years. And remarkable are the words of Mosheim concerning the Socinians: "They "dreaded the effects of intestine discord, which por-

[a] Nothing can be stronger for the doctrine of the Trinity, as one of its ablest advocates justly observes, than that the most ancient creeds should have been comprised (for so many learned men, upon good grounds, have conceived that they were comprised) in these few words: "I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and "the Holy Ghost;" since it is declaring the Sacred Three to be the One God; and no man, who had been baptized according to this form, could be ignorant of the doctrine.—See Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with the authors there referred to, p. 203.

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"tended the ruin of their community, before it could "arrive at any measure of stability or consistence. "This apprehension was too well founded; for, as "yet, they had agreed upon no regular system of "principles, which might serve as a centre and bond "of union. A summary of their religious doctrine "was first published in the year 1574. Their system, "afterwards changed and new modelled, required a "new confession of faith, to make known its princi-"ples, and give a clear and full account of its pre-"sent state. A new form was drawn up by Socinus "himself, and styled the RACOVIAN CATECHISM, "which is still considered as the CONFESSION OF "FAITH of the whole sect[b]."

The true question, therefore, concerning creeds seems to be, not whether any shall be imposed, but who shall be the imposers? Now, let us only suppose that the direction of ecclesiastical matters in this kingdom should pass into the hands of those persons who regard the doctrine of the Trinity as involving in it an absurdity equal to that of transubstantiation, and as being the grand obstacle to the conversion of Jews, Mahometans, and Deists, who deem the worship of Christ to be gross idolatry, and high treason against the majesty of the one supreme God; must not the new unitarian church, with its confession and services, be so constituted as utterly and for ever to exclude us from becoming members of it? Most undoubtedly, and of necessity, it must.

[b] Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. cent. xvi. sect. iii. part ii. chap. iv. § ix.

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"An unitarian people," we are told, "will not long "be satisfied with a trinitarian establishment." Indeed, I suppose they will not; they will endeavour to overturn it: and it is our business to prevent them from so doing.

The reasoning that has been so often employed against the propriety of decisions by fallible men, seems itself to be a fallacy, confuted by common sense, matter of fact, and universal experience. A society of fallible men will always decide for themselves: they must do so; they must do the best they can. Another society of fallible men will decide differently. Individuals must likewise decide for themselves to which society they will be united, or whether they will be united to either: and all must bear with one another. The nature of the case seems to admit of no other method.

In the mean time, the unitarians should consider, that we may be as firmly persuaded of the truth of our doctrines as they can be of the truth of theirs. They should do us the justice to believe that we are so; that we do not see the absurdities imputed to us; nor, when we teach the doctrine of three Persons, intend to teach that of three God's [c].

Some, once our brethren in the faith, have forsaken it, and gone out from us. We lament—we

[c] Crelius himself is candid enough to acknowledge, that the doctrine of three persons in one and the same individual essence does not constitute real and perfect tritheism; because of the close and inseparable union between them. See the passage cited in Stillingfleet on the Sufferings of Christ, part ii. near the end, vol. iii. page 407, of his works in folio.

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must lament—their defection; but we cannot help it. They have sacrificed their preferment to that which we think to be their error. What they have done cannot prove error to be truth; it proves the sincerity of their persuasion; and, as in the course of the controversy, we apprehend, has been made to appear, the weakness of their judgement.

Should a minister of the unitarian church, at any future time, by reading the writings of English and French philosophers, be seduced first to doubt, and then to disbelieve, the existence of the God whose worship, as a minister, he is obliged to conduct; and, upon that ground, relinquish his establishment, though the principal means of supporting himself and a family—the case is possible—what must they say, from whose society he thus excommunicates himself? Not that the tenet is right, but that the man is wrong.

Loud were the calls for an alteration of our forms, some years ago, from men, and very learned men, of the Arian opinion, who never once thought of denying the pre-existence of Christ, the miraculous conception, the plenary inspiration of the apostles and of Christ himself (for even that is now denied), the immortality of the soul, or the spiritual nature of the Deity. Had an alteration then taken place, it must now have been succeeded by another; as the principal of our present opponents has devised quite a different system, and seems to entertain a more favourable opinion of us than of the Arians[d]. But

[d] "The Arians are even less entitled to the appellation "of Unitarians than the Athanasians, who also lay claim to

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be this as it may. We shall be greatly blameable, if we part with our creeds, till our adversaries are better agreed what shall be substituted in their room; and till we are assured, that the remedy proposed will not be much worse than the disease under which they imagine us to labour[e]. Till that period shall

"it." History of Early Opinions, &c. i. 81. See the Preface, p. xv.

[e] "It is easy matter for men of wit and fancy to find fault "with any thing; but it requires thought and judgement to set-"tle things upon their true bottom. Let those who are displeased "with the received doctrine show us a better, and form any "other consistent scheme (consistent with Scripture and with "itself) if they can. Wise and good men will be always willing "to reform, if there be cause for it; but they will not be forward "to pull down what appears to be founded on a rock, in order "only to build upon the sand. The Trinitarians have some "satisfaction in observing, how long certain great wits have been "employed in new modelling Christianity; and have not yet "been able to agree in any one certain scheme." Thus while Dr. Priestly with so much earnestness and vehemence is pressing upon us the Socinian scheme, the author of Ben Mordecai's Apology laughs at the idea of settling the Christian faith by rectifying "a Greek particle in Justin's Trypho, or ransack-"ing antiquity for the opinions of the Nazarenes, Mineans, and "Ebionites;" calling upon us to attend to his doctrine of "a vi-"sible and inferior Jehovah." See the preface to his second edition, p. v.—The woman mentioned in Prov. xiv. 1. is not mentioned as the wisest of women, who "plucked down her "house with her own hands," to save others the trouble. Should we ever be persuaded to do like her, instead of the kingdom of God immediately appearing (which some seem to think would be the case), a very Babel would arise in consequence. If the experience of the last century cannot make us wise, most certain it

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arrive, there will be a necessity of "contending for "the faith delivered" to us.

II. There is something very unpleasing in the sound of the word CONTENTION, and volumes have been written on the offence occasioned by the thing itself. But, alas! it is one of those offences, which, I fear, "must needs come." Till the sons of Adam cease to be the sons of Adam, it cannot be prevented. So long, on one plea or another, the city will be attacked; and if attacked, it must be defended: the sentinel at his post cannot be blamed for giving the alarm, nor the garrison for appearing under arms. All that can be done in this contest, as well as others, is to provide, that it be conducted in an honourable way, according to the laws of war. "If it be pos-"sible," says an apostle, "as far as lieth in you, "live peaceably with all men[f]." Cases, it is therefore supposed, may happen, in which it will not be possible. It is not in our power to "live peaceably "with all men," if some men will not live peaceably with us. We must not be the aggressors: we must not engage knowingly in a bad cause; nor persevere, if, in the process, we shall discover our cause to be a bad one.

Wonder has been often expressed, that religion should ever have become the subject of contention. But the wonder would cease, if it were only consi-

is that we shall never become so. When a man deceives me once, says the Italian proverb, it is HIS fault; when twice, it is MINE.

[f] Rom. xii. 18.

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dered that things become the subjects of contention in proportion to their importance; and religion being the most important thing in the world, they who are serious in their religion will never suffer it to be taken from them without contention. The fault is not in religion, but in the different understandings, tempers, interests, passions, and prejudices of mankind. He who can rectify and adjust all these, will put an end to contention. Till this shall be effected, there will be heresies. The apostle uses a stronger term, "there MUST be heresies[5]:" and, therefore, such as are able must combat them, and maintain the doctrines to which they oppose themselves. The truths of God are not to be tamely given up. The injunction is, "Contend." The apostles contended against the Jews, Pagans, and the heresiarchs of their days. The fathers of the church contended against the same enemies, and others who arose in succession after them. The heroes of the reformation contended against the Romish corruptors of the faith; the bishops, clergy, and others of our own church, have contended against adversaries of various denominations; and if we expect that church to subsist, we must contend too.

It has been hinted to us, in some late publications, that if the trinitarian doctrines should continue to be obstinately maintained, the churches which maintain them, and the kingdoms in which such churches are supported, will ere long, be destroyed, to make way for the pure unitarian gospel. This is a very serious

[5] 1 Cor. xi. 19.

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and alarming intimation indeed. For a zealous antitrinitarian may fancy, that those idolatrous churches and kingdoms require to be quickened in their progress towards destruction; he may conceive himself in duty bound to become an instrument in executing the vengeance of Heaven upon them, for refusing to admit an Arian or Socinian reformation, tendered in a milder way. When "the faith," by us esteemed that "delivered to the saints," is represented "as the "abomination which maketh desolate," surely it must be high time either to give it up at once, if it be such, or to contend for it, if it be not.

Our opponents are shrewd, active, busy, bustling, and indefatigable. They regard the toleration not as leave only to exercise their own religion unmolested, but as a door opened to unlimited free inquiry; or, in other words, a full permission to attack the church in every possible way. They dare us to put in execution the laws which are still subsisting against the impugners of certain received articles of faith, enacted by those who were indubitably friends to toleration in general. They represent any human establishment, as such, to be a part of the grand apostasy; and wish to strip religion, that is, OUR religion, of the support and protection derived from its connexion with the state. They inform us, that the nation abounds with Socinians, at present concealed, but ready, on a proper occasion, to declare: that a mine is laid under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may, and probably soon will, inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion; in consequence of which, that edifice, the

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erection of which has been the work of ages, may be overturned in a moment, and so effectually, as that the same foundation can never be built upon again. Without any visible marks of decay, and before its bigotted friends suspect any danger, it may vanish, we are told, like a castle in romance[h].

If this information be just, we are under no small obligation to the person by whom it has been communicated. It is fair, it is manly, it is noble, it is kind! and we must blame ourselves alone, if the caverns be not forthwith searched, and the combustibles removed. But what a man wishes, he easily believes; and great, as we all know, is the power of a lively imagination. We will therefore indulge a hope, that the above state of facts may not be quite exact; however, in process of time it may possibly be realized, unless proper measures shall be taken on our side; unless we "contend."

The necessity of contending for the faith being thus evident, we are to consider,

III. The manner in which that contention should be carried on.

[h] See Dr. Priestley's Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 39, 40. It is somewhat remarkable, that in a sermon written and preached about four years ago, a friend of mine, aware of that "gunpowder," which Dr. Priestley and his friends (as he tells us) have been for some time employed in "laying, grain by grain, under "the old building," spoke then of "a mine, waiting, perhaps, "only till some unforeseen occurrence should kindle it, to destroy, at one tremendous explosion, the constitution in church "and state."—These were his very words; as if he had been the bearer of the lanthorn, while the Doctor was at work.

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When I say CONTEND, I do not mean by pains and penalties. Such we may inflict upon our adversaries; and, if they get into power (which, as they seem to think, will pretty soon be the case), they may inflict upon us. But by proceedings of this kind nothing is proved. The faith is apostolical; the contention should be so likewise. The weapons of our warfare must be Scripture and history, reason and argument. By these the cause must be defended. By these it has hitherto been defended, and the invaders have left many strong forts behind them untaken. We have seen nothing, as yet, which should induce us to depart from the doctrines of our Lord's pre-existence, divinity, and satisfaction, and to adopt the interpretations of Scripture devised by the Socinians; which, of all the interpretations at any time offered to the world, seem to be the farthest from RATIONAL[1]—a distinction to which persons of that persuasion have of late claimed a kind of exclusive right.

But though pains and penalties are out of the question, we are not to be remiss and lukewarm in the contest; we must "contend EARNESTLY." The word used by St. Jude, ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι, refers us to the severe struggles of the champions in the Grecian

[1] "Cannot one know (says an excellent writer, thoroughly "conversant in these subjects) that the Socinian interpretation "of John i. 1. and Heb. i. 10. or of the texts relating to Christ's "pre-existence, is not the mind of Scripture? Yea, one may "know it as certainly, as that a counter is not the king's coin, or "that a monster is not a man."

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games. The same allusion, upon the same subject, is employed in the Epistle to the Philippians. "Stand "fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together, "συναθλουντες, wrestling together, for the faith of the "Gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversa-"ries[k]." Firmness and intrepidity become the warrior in the day of battle. An appearance of timidity and irresolution will give the enemy occasion to say, that we are not sincere; that we distrust the goodness of the cause in which we are engaged. The spectators of the combat will easily be led to think so, and fall off to the adverse party. Of two contrary opinions men may be at liberty to profess either; but both are not therefore true. In a matter of so much moment, neutrality must be criminal. "Why halt "ye?" says the prophet. In other words—"Use "your judgement; choose your side; and adhere to "it, till you see good reason to the contrary." It is easy to foretel the issue of a conflict, if all be activity on one part, and indolence on the other. Athanasius once stood single against the world, and prevailed. But the faithful have not yet so far ceased from among us. Numbers of great, good, and able men are left sound in faith, and mighty in the Scriptures. A field worthy of their abilities and attainments is open before them, and there are many adversaries. Some opinions may be safely trusted with the public; they will die away of themselves. But others are of a nature so flattering to human pride, so congenial to the prejudices of an age long trained to despise mys-

[k] Phil. i. 27.

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teries, and propagated with so much industry, management, and confidence—that they ought to be withstood[1]. Tares will be sown, if the husbandman sleep; and he may be astonished, when he awakes, to behold the luxuriancy of their growth. No mischief will arise from discussion. Truth always has been, and always will be a gainer by it. It is a wholesome exercise for us. It excites attention, and prevents INDIFFERENCE,—the enemy, of all others, most to be dreaded.

But while zeal is recommended, let not charity be forgotten. They are by no means incompatible. Who more zealous than the great apostle of the Gentiles? And where can be found a brighter example of charity? Boldly confuting and reproving false doctrines and corrupt practices, but ever ready to devote himself for the welfare of those among whom they prevailed. After his own example he directs others to be αληθευοντες εν αγαπη, to "speak the "truth in love[m];" so to maintain truth as not to violate charity: a golden precept, worthy to be engraven on the hearts of all who may be called forth to "contend for the faith;" that they may do honour to their cause by the arguments proposed, and no dishonour to themselves by the manner of

[1] They *have* been withstood, and *well* withstood. The thanks of the church of England are due to Dr. Horsley, for his seasonable, learned, and judicious writings, in her defence. Let him occupy the department he is so thoroughly qualified to fill, and go on frustrating the attempts of our adversaries to deprive us of the argument from tradition.

[m] Ephes. iv. 15.

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proposing them. The weight of the reasons will not be at all diminished by the courteousness of the address: in its effect it will be much increased. Mankind care not to be driven; they must be led into all truth. It was the method practised by the apostles; it should be practised by their successors. Thus, and thus only, they are to "heap coals of fire on "the heads[n]" of their opponents. The dross will separate, and the metal flow pure. Logic should be used without acrimony; and wit, if it be used at all, tempered with good humour, so as not to exasperate the person who is the object of it; and then, we are sure, there is no mischief done. The disputant ought to be at once firm and calm; his head cool, and his heart warm. Thus a controversy sometimes begins; but thus, alas! it seldom ends; the irascible passions being generally excited, and full utterance given to them in its progress: allowance must therefore be made, on all sides, for the failings of humanity. That the ODIUM THEOLOGICUM exceeds every other, is said, perhaps, without sufficient reason. The vehemence of a contest will be in proportion to its supposed importance, the length of its continuance, or the frequency of its repetition. When men are earnest, in short, they are apt sometimes to be violent. Our adversaries have taken to themselves and their opinions the epithet of LIBERAL, as well as that of RATIONAL. It may be, with equal reason. For why it is more liberal to deny, than it is to affirm, the doctrine of the Trinity, seems

[n] Rom. xii. 20.

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hard to say: and some pages might easily be filled with language concerning that doctrine, employed by the Polonian fraternity, which would make every ear in this audience to tingle[o].

There is another property which one would most devoutly wish a controversy to possess, namely, brevity. A great book in this way is indeed a great evil, if the point can be settled in a small one. The superfluity of naughtiness should be cut off; all flourish and declamation, self-adulation and personal altercation, rhetorical amplification and digression, every sentence not immediately *ad rem*, as useless and noxious excrescences, pared away; that point discovered, on which the dispute turns, and the opponent closely confined to it[p]. Terms should be

[o] Plenty of it may be seen in that useful work, Dr. Jonathan Edwards's Preservative against Socinianism.

[p] In doing this, no disputant, perhaps, ever excelled Mr. Leslie. "The polemical skill of a Leslie," is an expression of Bolingbroke. A clergyman's library should not be without this author's theological works, in two volumes, folio, containing his pieces against Deists, Jews, Romanists, Socinians, and Quakers. He is said to have brought more persons from other persuasions into the church of England, than any man ever did; his skill in conversation being equal to that in writing. Allowance must be made for a style, which, though sufficiently perspicuous and nervous, is not according to the modern ideas of correctness and elegance. "Bayle styles him a man of great merit and "learning. Mr. T. Salmon observes, that his works must trans-"mit him to posterity, as a man thoroughly learned and truly "pious. But a better and more disinterested judge, Mr. Harris, "informs us, that he made several converts from popery; and "says that, notwithstanding his mistaken opinions about govern-"ment, and a few other matters, he deserves the highest praise for

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defined, to prevent ambiguity and evasion; arguments and objections carefully collected, and methodically arranged; stated and answered with all possible conciseness and perspicuity; leaving as little room as may be for replies and rejoinders; the sad consequence of which is not only loss of time and temper to the writers, but disgust in the readers, who grow weary, and, despairing of being able to fix their opinions, resolve to give themselves no farther trouble about religion. For general utility, perhaps the didactic form, with the objections duly noticed and obviated in their places, is preferable to the strictly polemical. The latter is often laid aside with the dispute which occasioned it; but the former, if well executed, may continue to be read and referred to, as a stable and standard book of instruction on the subject of which it treats, from age to age.

The conduct of our opponents of different denominations impresses one lesson upon us with great force. It is this; however our studies may be employed, never to lose sight of the grand object, but to keep it constantly in view, and contrive by all means to forward it. It is marvellous to behold in

"defending the Christian religion against Deists, Jews, and "Quakers, and for admirably well supporting the doctrines of "the Church of England against those of Rome." See Biographical Dictionary.—Mr. Leslie's writings have been neglected, because he had the misfortune to be a Nonjuror. But since the age is disposed to drop prejudices, it is a pity that this alone should be suffered to remain; especially as the subject of it is now "waxed old, and ready to vanish away."

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what manner every department of literature has been occupied, and converted into a battery against the faith and the church. Half our danger does not arise from tracts professedly penned on the subject of religion, but from writings of other kinds, carrying nothing hostile in their appearance. The unsuspecting reader, who sat down to inform or amuse himself with a piece of natural or civil history, biography, a poem, a tale, or a fable, if he have not his wits about him, finds his reverence for the doctrines of Christianity, and those who teach them, filched from him; rises, to his great surprise, half an infidel; and is not sure whether he has a soul, a Saviour, or a God. As it has not yet appeared that the talents of believers are less various or less excellent, than those of unbelievers, all these methods of diffusing error should be counteracted by the advocates for truth. The taste of the age should be attended to, and instruction administered through such vehicles as are most likely to make it palatable. Every man, in that way to which his genius directs him, should exert his abilities in the service of his Maker and Redeemer. He should early form a plan for this purpose, to be kept in view, during the course of his reading, whether stated or occasional. He will be pleased to find, when he does this, how every book he opens will lend its assistance, and furnish some hint that may be improved for the promotion of his design [q]. An observation may be

[q] In this particular, among others, one of our old divines used to say, he found the good effect of a custom he had long

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here added, that as in political, so in religious contests, execution is done among the people, not by bulky treatises, but small pamphlets, written down to the apprehensions of the vulgar, diligently circulated and sold at a low price[r].

My brethren of the clergy will, I am sure, consider, with me, and lay these things to heart. We engage, at ordination, not only "by the Scriptures "to teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine," but likewise to "withstand and convince gainsayers; "to be ready with all faithful diligence to banish "and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, "contrary to God's word; and both privately and "openly to call upon and encourage others to do "the same[s]." The faith is a precious deposit committed to our charge. No care, no pains can be too great, to preserve it to our people, and deliver it down to our successors in the ministry, pure and

practised, which was on a Sunday evening, to put a fresh sermon on the stocks for the Sunday ensuing. Something always occurred that was of use, in the reading of the week; during which, he never failed to ask himself, as he went on, To what purpose can I apply this, in the way of my profession?—An excellent rule. See that improving little book, the Life of Dr. Hammond, by Bishop Fell.

[r] An excellent little tract was printed for Rivington, in 1774. I wish 20,000 of them were dispersed through the kingdom, at this time. It was entitled, A Preservative against the Publications dispersed by modern Socinians; in which the impiety and absurdity of their principles are clearly shown; addressed by a country clergyman to his parishioners.

[s] Ordination Office.

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unadulterated. Neither violence nor fraud should be suffered to rob us of the inestimable treasure. God and his church expect and require that we fulfil honourably this engagement, so solemnly formed in the presence of both. Whenever our faith is assaulted, to us the world naturally looks up for its defence; and it is well, if a failure in this part of our duty be not, one day, urged against us, as an argument for the abolition of an useless order of men. It is the property of our great adversary, first to TEMPT, and then to ACCUSE.

The propagation and support of true religion constitute, indeed, our peculiar task, the prescribed employment of our time, the proper exercise of our powers and faculties; for want of which, they will be either turned to other pursuits quite foreign from our profession, or dissipated in frivolous amusements, or permitted to rust in sloth and indolence[t]. Study of the Scriptures and ecclesiastical history must ever be regarded as the first duty of a clergyman, because that alone can prepare and qualify him for a discharge of all the rest. It is a duty which, if cordially taken in hand and vigorously prosecuted, will soon become his pleasure. And when a man's duty becomes his pleasure, he is a happy man. Till then he never can be one; being indebted for his peace of mind, if he ever enjoy any; only to the want of consideration and re-

[t] When a friend told Bishop Cumberland, he would wear himself out by his incessant application: "It is better," replied the bishop, "to *wear* out than to *rust* out."

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flection. But what is there which can so enlarge, improve, and delight the human mind, as a contemplation of the truths and dispensations of the Almighty? where is the pleasure that can stand the comparison for a moment? I know of none that is not as much inferior as earth is to heaven.

The church of England, from the time of the reformation, has gloried in a learned clergy, who stood prepared to repel, with skill and vigour, the assaults of her various adversaries. Some would persuade us that this glory is departing from her. "The number of learned Socinians, it is said, is "increasing; that of learned Trinitarians decreas-"ing[u]."

The remark cannot but excite some wonder, when coming from one so evidently overmatched, as he appears to have been, in point of learning, by his very respectable antagonist. It affords, however, a useful hint to us, not to grow slack and remiss in our professional studies; not to think of subsisting on the fame acquired by our predecessors, but diligently availing ourselves of their labours, still farther to advance and set forward the truth by our own. A general diffusion of knowledge in these latter days has enabled the lower orders of mankind to become acquainted with the objections urged against doctrines laid down by our church as essential and fundamental. Her ministers, therefore, will be frequently called upon for answers to those objections; which, without having read and thought

[u] Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 51.

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well upon the subject, they may be at a loss to furnish. Advantage will be made of this circumstance; their people will be seduced, and the enemy will exult. A very small portion of time, applied regularly and constantly to any one pursuit, will soon effect things almost incredible. It is recorded of the great Usher, that, wishing to know, at first hand, the sentiments of antiquity on the points in dispute between the Romanists and ourselves, he went through, between the age of twenty and thirty-eight, the voluminous writings of the Fathers by devoting, amidst his other labours, a small proportion of time every day to that purpose. Tasks of this extent and difficulty need not be now imposed on a clergyman. The evidence on most controverted doctrines has been collected and arranged for him; and by means of a few well-chosen books[w], perused with due attention, he may become a sufficient ma-

[w] Such as—Bishop Bull's Latin Works; Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity; his Sermons at Lady Moyer's Lectures; Dr. Ridley's, at the same Lecture, on the Holy Spirit; the writings of Dr. Randolph; Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity; Full Answer to the Essay on Spirit; Letter to the Common People; to a Young Gentleman at Oxford; Remarks on the Confessional.

On Socinianism; Grotius de Satisfactione; Stillingfleet's Discourse on the true Reason of Christ's Sufferings, against Crellius; Bishop Coneybear's Sermon on the Satisfaction; Edwards's Preservative; Leslie's Dialogues on Socinianism; with Mosheim's Account of its rise and progress, in his Ecclesiastical History.

For the Judgement of the Jewish Church against the Unitarians, Dr. Allix's book with that title; a most learned, valuable, and decisive work on that part of the subject.

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ster of the subject, and of the arguments which have been, or indeed can be, produced; for there is but little fresh matter at this time to be started. What progress might he make, within the compass of a year, at the rate of a couple of hours only in each day!

By such an employment of his hours, he will be prepared, whenever summoned, to render a good account of them. Conscious that he must render an account, and cannot render a good one, it is impossible for him, if he reflect at all, to continue long at ease. The grand question concerning our conduct is, how it will appear at the great scrutiny: and he alone is truly wise, who spends his time as, at the last hour, he will wish to have spent it. Happy the man, who may be able with all humility to say, when that hour shall come—"The time which "thou hast given me has been passed in thy service. "I have not suffered myself, through indolence or "dissipation, to live in ignorance of thy truth, or "to withhold it from others. I have laboured dili-"gently and faithfully to find it; and when found, "to publish and defend it. It is not my fault, if the "people perish for lack of knowledge. I have done "my best: I have fought a good fight: I have kept "the faith; and endeavoured that others should do "the same." This is a state of satisfaction and comfort for a minister of Christ, weighed against which, "the world, with all its wealth, all its pleasures, "and all its honours, is dust upon the balance, "without weight and without regard."

But, besides the testimony borne him by his con-

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science within, other witnesses will appear in his favour from without. He will have the approbation and thanks of all those who wish well to the church and to their country; who do not apprehend, that the latter will be benefited by the destruction of the former, or a nation saved by apostasy from its Saviour. He will have the attestation of multitudes, that by his ministry, by his discourses, by his writings, they were preserved or reclaimed from error and from death, and conducted in the way of truth and life. "Behold him, and the children which "God hath given him, like the arrows in the hand of "the mighty: happy is the man that hath his quiver "full of them; he shall not be ashamed when he "speaketh with his enemies, at the seat of judge-"ment[x]."

On that seat he will view the blessed Person for whose faith he has contended; whose cause he has maintained; the honour of whose name he has asserted and vindicated; who has been a spectator of the conflict, and will award the crown.

[x] Isaiah, viii. 18.; Heb. ii. 31; Psal. cxxvii. 4, 5.

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DISCOURSE VI.

THE TRINITY IN UNITY.

MATTHEW, XXVIII. 19.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

SUCH is the solemn form of baptism, prescribed by our blessed Lord himself, as a perpetual standing law to his church. Having redeemed mankind, and thereby acquired a new and special claim to their homage and service, he entered upon, and took possession of, his purchased inheritance. And for what end? Plainly, that he might bring all nations, thus made his own by right of redemption, to the knowledge and worship of the true God. And how is this done? Why, by making them acquainted, in the very first instance, with the obligations conferred upon them by three ever blessed Persons, called by the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. These three Persons, therefore, thus related and thus named, constitute that one true God, into whose name, faith, and profession, people of all the nations of the earth, and, among them, we who are here assembled, have

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been baptized. In this consisted the sum of Christianity: on this foundation were the apostles to erect a church throughout all the world. Here, if any where, a right understanding, upon so important a point as the nature of God and the manner of his existence, would be highly necessary; nor could any one mistake more dangerously and fundamentally, than in such an article as this.—Let us then consider, if you please, how much is implied in the form of baptism thus prescribed by our Lord to the universal church, and by that church retained and observed from its first foundation to the present hour; how this is confirmed by the declarations of Scripture at large; and the interest we have in the doctrine that shall be thus established.

I. Now by the being baptized in the name of God, can be meant no less than entering into covenant with a person, as God; professing faith in him as such; enlisting oneself into his service; and vowing all obedience and submission to him. Such is the natural, the obvious import of this rite, by which we are admitted into the church of Christ, this solemn form of baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that is, into the faith, service, and worship, of the Holy Trinity.

For let us reflect a little—

The nations were to be baptized in the name of three persons, in the same manner, and therefore, surely, in the same sense, as in the name of one. Whatever honour, reverence, or regard is paid to the Father in this solemn rite, the same we cannot

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but suppose paid to all three. Is he acknowledged as the object of worship? So are the other two persons likewise. Is he God and Lord over us? So are they. Are we his subjects, servants, and soldiers, enrolled under him? So are we equally under all. Are we hereby regenerated and made the temple of the Father? So are we likewise of the Son and Holy Ghost. "We will come," says our Lord, "and "make our abode with him[a]." The outward act respects all the three; the inward meaning and signification must do the same.

We may consider likewise, that in the very names of Father and Son, a near relation, alliance, and unity, between two of the persons, is intimated; and in reason, we must infer something of a similar kind for the third, so closely joined with them. It is not said, "in the name of God and his two faithful ser-"vants;" nor "of God, and Christ, and the Holy "Ghost;" which might have suggested a thought, that one only of the three was God; but, "in the "name of the Father and of the Son," a style perfectly equal and familiar, without any note of distinction more than that of a personal relation, carrying with it the idea of a sameness of nature; as, among men, every father and son are of the same human nature with each other. From the very wording of the form of baptism, therefore, most reasonably might it be presumed, that the first two Persons named were equally divine: and the inference from thence would fairly, and indeed unavoidably, reach

[a] John, xiv. 23.

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to the third, to make all suitable and consistent; besides, that the terms Holy, and Spirit, evidently point the same way.

But it is yet farther to be considered by us—and a consideration it is of very great weight indeed upon the subject—that a new religion was to be introduced with this solemn form of words. And among whom was it to be introduced? Among Gentiles, or Heathen nations. These were to be taught to turn from their vanities to the living God; to renounce their idols and false gods, and so to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Now, what must occur to THEM, upon this occasion, but that, instead of all their deities, to whom they had before bowed down, they were in future to serve, worship, and adore, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the only true and living God? From the pompous and solemn proclamation of these three Persons in opposition to all other gods, what could THEY conclude; but that these Three possessed in reality that Divinity which was falsely presumed with respect to the gods of the nations; that they had a natural right to all that homage and service, which men should pay to a Divine Being? We may add, that the circumstance of the form running in the NAME—not NAMES, but in the singular number, NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, might and did, in the strongest manner, intimate that the authority of all the Three was the same, their power equal, their persons undivided, and their glory one.

The last consideration under this head shall be,

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that nothing can appear more unreasonable, or unnatural, than to suppose that God and two creatures are here joined together in so solemn a rite of admission into a new religion into the service of the living God, in direct opposition to all creature-worship. For no rational account can be given, why the Son and Holy Ghost should be thus closely and equally joined with the Father, in an act so public, and of so high importance to the salvation of all men, unless it be, that all men are required to believe in, to worship, and to serve them also, as well as the Father: neither can it be reasonably imagined, that they are recommended to us in any such capacity, as Persons to be believed in, served, and adored, if they be creatures only; much less, if Christ be no more than a mere man, like one of us; and the Holy Spirit a property, or quality only, of the Father—in short, if the three, taken together, be any other than the living and true God.

Thus far we have been arguing on the words of the text, and the doctrine implied in them, without taking in what the Scripture has revealed at large concerning the Divinity of the three Persons, which was, in the

Second place, proposed to be done.

Concerning the Divinity of the Father there is no dispute. Respecting that of the Son, you shall judge for yourselves, when I have laid before you what the Scriptures teach relative to his titles, his attributes, and the actions ascribed to him.

The divine titles given to the Son in the holy Scripture are as follow: He is called "the Word

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"that was in the beginning with God, and was "God;" that "was made flesh," and whose "glory "was the glory of the only begotten of the Father[b]." When it is said, "A virgin shall conceive, and bear "a son," it is said also, "they shall call his name "Emmanuel, that is, God with us[c]." He is the Lord, before whose face John the Baptist was sent[d]:" the Lord God foretold by Isaiah, who was to "feed "his flock like a shepherd[e]." Of Jesus Christ it is affirmed by St. John, "This is the true God, and "eternal life[f]." St. Paul mentions "the appearance "of the great God and our Saviour," or, "our "great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ[g]," for it is he who shall appear to judge the world. Isaiah styles him, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty "God[h];" St. Paul, again, "God over all, blessed "for evermore[i]." In the Old Testament, Christ is frequently called Jehovah[k], a name which can belong to no one but God. In the Revelation he is introduced as saying of himself, "I am Alpha and "Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the "Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to "come, the Almighty[l]." By St. Paul he is styled

[b] John, i. 1. 14.
[c] Matt. i. 23.
[d] Luke, i. 76.
[e] Isa. xl. 10, 11.
[f] 1 John, v. 20.
[g] Tit. ii. 13.; 1 Pet. i. 7.
[h] Isa. ix. 6.
[i] Rom. ix. 5.

[k] Jer. xxiii. 6. Zech. xii. 10. cited John, xix. 37. Rev. i. 7. Isa. xl. 10.

[l] Rev. i. 8. "I cannot forbear recording it," says Dr. Doddridge, "that this text has done more than any other in the Bible "towards preventing me from giving into that scheme, which

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"the Lord of Glory;" and by St. John, "King of "Kings, and Lord of Lords." And thus much for his titles.

As to his attributes, he is declared to be eternal, "without beginning of days, or end of life[m];" unchangeable, remaining the same, when the heavens, and the earth, and all that is therein, shall be changed and pass away; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, "to-day, and for ever[n]; knowing all things[o]; knowing "what is in man[p]; searching the hearts and reins[q]; "present every where in the midst of his people "wherever assembled[r]," to hear the prayers put up at the same time from the different quarters and ends of the earth; which cannot be the case of saints or angels.

Of the actions ascribed to Christ, it may suffice to name four only. According to the Scriptures, he created the world by his power[s]; he governs it by his providence; how else can he superintend the concerns of his church? He redeemed it by his mercy; and he will judge it at the last day. Surely no being less than Divine can be equal to works like these. When he shall appear on his throne, as the

"would make our Lord Jesus Christ no more than a deified crea-"ture." A denial of the PRE-EXISTENCE must have seemed strange doctrine to HIM. Dr. Kippis, who was his pupil, when he comes to Dr. Doddridge's life, in the Biographia, will tell us, perhaps, what he thought of it.

[m] Heb. vii. 3.
[n] Heb. xiii. 8.
[o] John, xvi. 30; xxi. 17.
[p] John, ii. 25.
[q] Rev. ii. 23.
[r] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[s] John, i. 3.; Heb. i. 10.

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Judge of all the earth, who is the man that will refuse to worship him[t]?

The Holy Spirit is described in Scripture as the immediate author and worker of miracles; the inspirer of the prophets and apostles; the searcher of all hearts, and the comforter of good Christians in difficulties. To lie to him is the same thing as to lie to God. Blasphemy against him is unpardonable. To resist him is the same thing as to resist God. He is in God, and knows the mind of God as perfectly as a man knows his own mind; and that in respect of all things, even the deep things of God. The bodies of men are his temple, and, by being HIS temple, are the temple of GOD. He is joined with God the Father, not only in the solemn form of baptism, as we have seen above, but in religious oaths, and invocations for grace and peace; in the same authoritative mission and vocation of persons into the ministry: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas "and Saul[u]." Must he not then be a PERSON? In a word, he is LORD, or JEHOVAH, and GOD, and LORD OF HOSTS[v].

[t] I do not see my Saviour only in "a few detached passages" of either Testament. I see him conducting the œconomy of the divine dispensations, through both, from the creation to the consummation of all things, as the יהוה the מלאך יהוה and O λογος του Θεου. Dr. Allix and Mr. Taylor had both demonstrated this point. It is only to be wished, the latter had drawn the conclusion drawn by the former—the just and proper conclusion—that the Person spoken of must indeed be VERY God.

[u] Acts, xiii. 2.

[v] See the conclusion of Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine, &c. See also Dr. Ridley.

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To these testimonies for the Divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit I shall add only one observation more, namely, that in a great number of instances, the very same things are said, in different places of Scripture, of all the three divine Persons, and the very same actions ascribed to them[x]. The whole Trinity is said to be eternal, holy, true, living, and every where present; to have made man; to instruct and illuminate him; to lead us, to speak to us, and to be with us; to give authority to the church; to sanctify the elect; to perform every divine and spiritual operation; and to raise the dead. Therefore, these three were, are, and will be, one God, from everlasting to everlasting[y].

Having now considered the doctrine of the Trinity as implied in the words of the text, and confirmed by the declarations of the Scriptures at large, I am to show, in the

Third and last place, the interest we all have in the doctrine thus established; or, in other words, we

[x] See the conclusion of Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine, &c.

[y] Such being the fact, all disputation concerning the manner of the Distinction, the manner of the Union, the manner of the Generation, and the manner of the Procession, is needless and fruitless: needless, because if we have divine authority for the fact, it sufficeth; that is all we are concerned to know: fruitless, because it is a disputation without ideas; after a long, tedious, intricate, and perplexed controversy, we find ourselves—just where we were—totally in the dark. Such has been the case respecting this and other questions. God is pleased to reveal the fact; man insists upon apprehending the mode: in his present state he cannot apprehend it; he therefore denies the fact, and commences unbeliever.

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have endeavoured to show what the three divine Persons are in themselves, and what relation they bear to each other, let us now inquire what they are, and what relation they bear to us, and what are the duties on our side resulting from that relation; the benefits conferred by them, and the return, in love, honour, and gratitude, due from us.

Many apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity to be what is called a SPECULATIVE doctrine only, that is to say, a doctrine, concerning which men may think, and conjecture, and reason, and dispute, for their amusement, but of no effect or importance in a religious life. This is a considerable mistake in judgement; and to prove that it is so, let us only ask one question, What is the doctrine of most importance to man, in his religious concerns? Undoubtedly it is that of his redemption from sin and sorrow, from death and hell, to righteousness and joy, immortality and glory. But of such redemption what account do the Scriptures give us? By whom was the gracious scheme originally concerted, and afterwards carried into execution? Was it not by the three Persons of the ever blessed and adorable Trinity?

It was not an afterthought, a new design, formed upon the transgression and fall of our first parents. That event was foreseen, and provision made accordingly. For upon the very best authority we are informed, that Christ was "the Lamb slain from the "foundation of the world[z];" that is (for it cannot be otherwise understood), slain in effect, in the divine

[z] Rev. xiii. 8.

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purpose and counsel. It is likewise said, that "grace was given us in Christ Jesus, before the "world began[a]." The words intimate, that previous to the creation of the world, something had passed in our favour above; that the plan of our future redemption was then laid; that some agreement, some covenant, relative to it, had been entered into; "grace was given us," not in our proper persons, for as yet we were not—we had no being—but in the person of him who was afterward to become our representative, our Saviour—"in Christ Jesus." Now the plan must have been laid, the covenant entered into, by the parties who have since been graciously pleased to concern themselves in its execution. Who these are we cannot be ignorant. It was the Son of God who took our nature upon him, and in that nature made a full and sufficient oblation, satisfaction, and atonement, for the sins of the world. It was the Father who accepted such oblation, satisfaction, and atonement; and in consequence forgave those sins. It was the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and the Son, through the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, by his enlightening, healing, and comforting grace, to apply to the hearts of men, for all the purposes of pardon, sanctification, and salvation, the merits and benefits of that oblation, satisfaction, and atonement.

Say no more, then, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a matter of curiosity and amusement only. Our

[a] 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. i. 2.

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religion is founded upon it. For what is Christianity but a manifestation of the three divine Persons, as engaged in the great work of man's redemption, begun, continued, and to be ended by them, in their several relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, three Persons, one God? If there be no Son of God, where is our redemption? If there be no Holy Spirit, where is our sanctification? Without both, where is our salvation? And if these two Persons be any thing less than divine, why are we baptized equally in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? Let no man, therefore, deceive you: "This "is the TRUE GOD, and eternal life[b]."

And while you suffer no man to deceive you, do not, I beseech you, deceive yourselves. Benefits conferred require duties to be paid. Remember what the three divine Persons have done for you, and forget not what they expect that you should do in return. For how little will it avail you to believe aright concerning the Trinity, if you live so as to displease the Trinity?—You know and believe in the true God; you do well. But let not that which is an honour to you, be any encouragement to dishonour God; the knowledge of whom can only serve to increase your condemnation, if you live in the practice of pride and malice, envy and hatred, lust and intemperance, even as the Heathen who know him not. And though it be the faith of a Christian which distinguishes him from the rest of mankind, yet that faith, to profit him, must appear in the

[b] 1 John, v. 20.

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conduct of his life; as love to a friend is best witnessed by a readiness to do him service. It is true, the service is not the love, nor of equal value with it; yet the love that refuses the service will be accounted as nothing. "The mystery of faith" is an invaluable treasure; but the vessel that contains it must be clean and undefiled: it must be "holden in a "pure conscience[c];" as the manna, that glorious symbol of the word of faith preached to us by the Gospel, was confined to the tabernacle, and preserved in a vessel of gold. A mind that is conformed to this world, and given up to its pleasures, though it repeats the creed without questioning a single article of it, will be abhorred in the sight of God, as a vessel unfit for the master's use, and unworthy, because unprepared, to stand in the most holy place. It is the great excellency of faith, that it can produce such a transformation in the life and manners, as no other principle has any power to do. But many are possessed of this truth, without applying it to their own advantage. Let them, however, bear in mind, that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" none of the world's dross or impurity will be suffered to continue in his sight. And in this he is no hard master, reaping where he had not sown, and requiring the fruit of good works, without giving us strength and ability to bring them forth. He has provided for us the precious blood of the Lamb, and offered to us the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled to serve that true and living God in whom we believe. If we are purged by HIM, we

[c] 1 Tim. iii. 9.

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shall be clean; if he washes us, we shall be whiter than snow; and when the kingdom of God shall come, and his glory shall appear, we shall be prepared to behold his face in righteousness[d].

The sum of the whole matter, as St. Paul has wonderfully expressed it in a single verse, is this—"Through Christ we have an access by one Spirit "unto the Father[e]." To the Father, with a due sense of this great honour and privilege, as sons of God, let us therefore address ourselves for pardon and admission to our heavenly inheritance: "O God, "the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!" But as we have no deserts of our own, no works of righteousness by which to claim his favour, and are entitled only through the sufferings and satisfaction of Christ, let us beseech HIM to intercede for us, and plead his merits with the Father: "O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, "have mercy upon us miserable sinners!" And since the benefits of his merits are applied, and our pardon sealed, and ourselves enabled to render an acceptable service, only by the operations and assistances of the Holy Spirit, let us implore HIS aid also: "O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from

[d] It has been asked, of what importance the doctrine of the Trinity can be to the state. We answer, Much, every way; as it is a doctrine of the Scriptures, and as it is a doctrine pregnant with the noblest motives to Christian love and obedience. It therefore requires and demands the support of every state wishing to enjoy the favour and protection of that God who, for such gracious purposes, hath revealed it.

[e] Ephes. ii. 18.

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"the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us mi-
"serable sinners!" Yet remembering, that, how various soever the œconomy may be, salvation is the one sole undivided end and work of all; therefore to All let us address our earnest prayers and invocations, as to the Great Power to whom we have consecrated ourselves and services: "O holy, blessed, "and glorious Trinity, three Persons, and one God, "have mercy upon us miserable sinners!"

And thou, almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech thee, that thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest one God world without end.

To this one God, for the means of grace vouchsafed to us in this life, and for the hopes of glory in another, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, majesty, and dominion, all praise and adoration, both now and for ever.

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DISCOURSE VII.

CHARITY RECOMMENDED ON ITS TRUE MOTIVE.

1 JOHN, IV. 11.

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

GREATER injustice cannot be done to the doctrines of Christianity, than to suppose them barren speculations, subjects intended only for the meditations of the pious in their closets or the controversies of the learned in their writings, and issuing in no conclusions for the benefit of society, and the comfort of mankind. The contrary is happily evinced by the words just read, in which allusion is made to the incarnation of the Son of God, as the great instance of the divine love towards us; and that love proposed as the principle and the pattern of our love toward our neighbour. "If God so loved us," that he "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our "sins,"—such are the words immediately preceding the text—then, "we ought also to love one another." We might ask him in whom zeal for the welfare of his fellow-creatures burns with the brightest and

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most ardent flame, what his patriotic and generous heart could wish more, than that men might be brought to this blessed temper of mind? Did it but prevail in its full extent, it would reform the world at once. Transgression would cease, and with it much of our misery and trouble. The reign of righteousness and happiness would commence, and paradise be, in great measure, restored upon earth. St. Paul assigns the reason in very few words, "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour[a];" it can work him no ill; it can never injure him in his person, his bed, his property, or his character; it cannot so much as conceive a desire for any thing that belongs to him. But it resteth not content with negatives. It not only worketh him no ill, but it must work for him all the good in its power. Is he hungry? It will give him meat. Is he thirsty? It will give him drink. Is he naked? It will clothe him. Is he sick? It will visit him. Is he sorrowful? It will comfort him. Is he in prison? It will go to him, and, if possible, bring him out. Upon this ground, wars must for ever cease among nations, dissensions of every kind among lesser societies, and the individuals that compose them. All must be peace, because all would be love. And thus would every end of the incarnation be accomplished; good will to men, peace on earth, and to God on high glory from both.

In the farther prosecution of the subject, your attention is requested to a few observations on the

[a] Rom. xiii. 10.

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motive proposed by St. John for the duty of charity; and the best *manner* of performing the duty upon that motive.

Many seem to think, that if charity be but shown, the motive is a matter of indifference. It may be so to the party receiving, but not to the party bestowing. A sick person is equally benefited, whether he who sits by his bed-side sits there from real affection, or with design to make a will in his own favour. Nothing can determine the sterling worth of an action, but a knowledge of the motive upon which it is performed. Here, then, we should be very careful not to deceive ourselves. We should deal fairly, and search our hearts to the bottom. In the day of inquisition and retribution, he who made them, and therefore knows what is in them, will certainly do so. Men and angels, on that day, will be made acquainted not only with all we have done, but with the true reasons why we did it; and the transactions of human life will be found far other than they seem. Nay, there are, even now, men of the world, endowed with sagacious and penetrating minds, who judging partly from what they experience in themselves, and partly from what they have observed in others, are not easily imposed upon. By knowing a person's general character, and laying circumstances together, they will give a shrewd guess at what is passing within, and not be led to take the ostensible motive for the real. Some French authors, and, after them, some English ones, writing upon this plan, have given a very unfavourable representation indeed of human nature. Their

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maxims are by no means universally true; but might be rendered serviceable, if we made use of them, not to censure others, but to examine ourselves; not to judge our neighbours, but to let our own consciences plead, Guilty or Not Guilty.

In the case before us, some information is necessary for us all, lest, after performing actions of charity, by performing them upon wrong and sinister motives, we become exposed to the mortification of losing their reward. We may perform them merely because there is a decency and propriety in so doing; others perform them, and we should be thought meanly of were we to omit them: we may perform them out of vanity, to acquire the character of benevolent; a character to which, perhaps, upon the whole, we have no good title: we may perform them out of envy, lest a rival bear off the honour from us: we may perform them to become popular, and serve by them some secular and political interest; we may perform them in the way of commutation for a favourite sin, in the practice of which we have determined to continue, and hope thus to buy off the punishment due to it. In this last article we shall find ourselves grievously mistaken. In all the rest may be applied the words of our Lord; "You have your reward:" you sought the praise of men; you obtained it: you sought not the praise of God; you obtained it not.

There is yet another motive, concerning which the determination is more difficult—when we perform an act of charity, to escape from the pain we feel at the sight of misery. We relieve the object; but it

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is to relieve ourselves. We hear much of these fine feelings, from persons who reject with disdain the influence of a higher principle. God forbid we should depreciate this humane and exquisitely tender sentiment, which the beneficent Author of our nature gave us, as a spur to remove the distresses of others, in order to get rid of our own uneasiness. But it has been justly observed, that "where not strengthened by "superior motives, it is a casual and precarious in-"strument of good, and ceases to operate, except "in the immediate presence, and within the audible "cry, of misery. This sort of feeling often forgets "that any calamity exists which is out of its own "sight; and though it would empty its purse for such "an occasional object as rouses transient sensibility, "yet it seldom makes any stated provision for miser-"ies, which are not the less real because they do "not obtrude upon the sight, and awaken the ten-"derness of immediate sympathy. This is a sort "of mechanical charity, which requires springs and "wheels to set it a going[b]."

Not so the real Christian charity recommended in the text to be performed upon another motive—"If "God so loved us"—as he hath done—"we ought "also to love one another;" a motive at once rational, pure, and permanent.

I say, a rational motive. There is indeed a feeling and an affection in the case; but they are founded on the highest truth and the strongest reason; they are fixed and directed by the judgement. A

[b] Thoughts on the Manners of the Great, p. 64.

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friend has done me the greatest service in the world; to his kindness I owe every good that I possess, every comfort that I enjoy. His kindness I will therefore return through life, in every instance which falls within my power. This is the principle: it is, in short, gratitude; a principle, destitute of which, in social intercourse, the world itself scarce allows to any person more than the name of a man. Such is the idea universally entertained of ingratitude to a friend, a benefactor, a master, a parent, a prince. But does ingratitude, then, change its nature, and put off its deformity, when the object is the best of friends, the most generous of benefactors, the most indulgent of masters, the tenderest of parents, and the most gracious of princes? God has made us, and redeemed us; he has given grace, and promised glory. He asks no other return, but that we love him; and, as we can bring no advantage to him by so doing, that we transfer such love, for his sake, to our brethren; and he places it to his own account. In these circumstances if we love not them, we cannot be deemed to love him. In the whole compass of our knowledge there exists not, surely, a truth which, while it speaks so warmly to the human heart, approves itself so completely to the human understanding.

The motive is likewise pure. It originates from all that is liberal, generous, and noble in the soul of man. It has been said, there is a reward promised, and therefore it is mercenary. But they who say this, seem not sufficiently to have considered the nature of the reward. I love my friend, and desire,

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of course, to be with him, to enjoy his company and conversation, and to live in his presence. In all this there is nothing mercenary, nothing sensual or selfish[c]. Of such a kind is the reward promised by our heavenly Friend. The desire of it is no sign of the depravity, but of the exaltation and perfection of our souls. The body indeed will have its share, but not in its present state. It will be refined, it will be spiritualized, by the working of an almighty power, able to subdue all things to itself; it will be changed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, and fashioned like unto that of its great Saviour and Redeemer. The reward is intellectual and divine; and would be no reward to a person who was not himself become so. The motive, therefore, notwithstanding the reward, is as pure as it is rational.

And it is as permanent as it is pure. Is vanity our motive for charitable actions? It may cease. Is worldly interest? It may fail. Is fashion? It may vanish away. Is a feeling of compassion and sympathy? Such temperaments may change, and often do so. But the argument deduced from the love of God towards us can never fail, any more than that love on which it is founded. It meets us

[c] "The self-love, which aims at the rewards of another life, "is perfectly consistent with social; the rewards being promised "to those only who love their neighbours as themselves." See p. 203 of the Reverend Mr. Whitaker's Sermons on Education, which well deserve the attention of all who are concerned in that useful and honourable employment.

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when we arise in the morning, and when we go to our repose at night; when we behold the heavens, and the earth, and all the hosts of them serving our necessities, and ministering to our enjoyments; when we find ourselves surrounded by our families and our friends; when we go out, and when we come in; above all, when, as now, we visit his temple, and hear, from his blessed word, the history of those wonderful works that he has wrought, and of the felicity he has prepared for us in another world, when this in which we now live shall be passed away, and gone into perdition. Often as we acknowledge these favours, and praise him for the mercy which endureth for ever, the question should occur, How can I acknowledge them, with what face can I praise him for them, if, after so much given, I am not ready, upon this principle, to give to others? Verily, our praises, as well as our prayers, will rise up in the judgement against us, and condemn us.—No—if we hope for final acceptance with our God, let us always, in our life and at our death, remember the inference in the text, and act upon it—"If "God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The strength of this inference, and the hold it has taken upon your minds, will appear this day, by the support afforded to an institution which needs support, and deserves it.

It needs support, as relying solely on the voluntary contributions of well-disposed persons, and must drop if they are withholden. But it can never be—In this respect, without incurring the charge of self-adulation, we may say, that all na-

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tions must yield the palm to Englishmen. At the first call of the kind, they readily "put their hands "to the plough;" and when they have so done, it is not their custom to "look back."

That it deserves support, you will all be convinced, when it shall have been briefly stated to you, that the objects relieved by it are poor; that they are women; that they are married women, in the most painful and perilous situation; and that the relief is brought home to them in their own houses.

God could have ordained that all should have been rich. But he has not so ordained. Poverty, with every other evil, came in upon man's transgression. The alteration which then took place in the earth rendered labour necessary. If none were poor, none would labour; and if some did not labour, none could eat. Difference there must be in rank and order; and the rich are not of more service to the poor, than the poor to them. Equality of condition could not subsist by the constitution of nature, as the case has stood since the fall. It must be effected by a new way; by the dispensation of love and charity. The indigence of some must be helped by the superfluity of others. "The poor "shall never cease out of thy land," says the God of Israel to his favoured people; "therefore, I "command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand "wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, "in thy land[d]." An opportunity of being blessed

[d] Deut. xv. 11.

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is offered to the wealthy, and they should take particular care not to let it pass them unregarded; for, "Blessed is the man that considereth the poor and "needy." In the sight of God, we are all poor. "He openeth his hand," and from it we receive, both for our bodies and our souls, food and raiment, medicine, liberty, and joy. Our Saviour himself, rich in the possession of all things visible and invisible, yet for our sakes became poor; he has directed us, in the persons of the poor, to behold him as present, and when they solicit our charity, to bestow it according. On the behalf of poverty, more cannot be said.

But it is peculiarly afflictive when it falls upon the weaker sex. At the sight of them in distress, few hearts are so hard as not to relent and show mercy and compassion. Formed originally from man, to man they of course look up for support. It is his duty, and in all civilized nations it has ever been his glory, to afford it. Their claim upon us is indeed a just one. They were created as help-mates, and through life are found to be such. From the cradle to the grave, from the swaddling-clothes to the winding-sheet, we are indebted to their good offices; offices which can with propriety be performed by them alone. By them is the burden of cares domestic and œconomical taken off from us. The tenderness and sympathy of their nature alleviate our sorrows, their affection and fidelity double our joys.

The persons assisted by our benevolent institution are *married* women. For those in a single state,

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whom thoughtless, unfeeling, cruel profligacy had seduced, and over whom savage, brutal lust had tyrannized for a time, and then cast them, destitute and forlorn, upon the public, where there was none to help; for such, I say, when sufferings and the grace of God co-operating had led them to repentance, and to seek forgiveness, where we must all seek it, at the hands of a Redeemer—for such, a house of refuge has been opened, and ample provision made in it, of all the assistance requisite for the purpose. And a noble charity it is. "There is "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" there is a joy peculiar to the circumstance of the sheep that is found, which cannot happen, unless that sheep has been lost. But let us not, therefore, in the mean time, forget the wants sustained by such of the flock as, having not wandered, require attention and provision in the fold. "Marriage is ho-"nourable:" God has pronounced it to be so, and man cannot render it otherwise. By its offspring come the strength of kingdoms, the establishment of thrones, and the upholding of the world. Among the Romans, more than four ages elapsed, from the foundation of their city, without any complaint or process on account of adultery; and it was not till the year 521, that they saw the first divorce; when, though the cause was specious, the indignation of all Rome pursued the divorcer to the end of his days. These men were Heathens; but their morals put Christians wofully to the blush! Let us not be wanting in our endeavours to roll away the reproach which lies so heavy on the present generation, by

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this instance of regard shown to the honest and faithful married.

It is shown at a time when they most need it—a time of distress and anguish, when they are suffering under the sentence passed from the beginning; when pains of body, sorrows of heart, and terrors of imagination, assail them with combined forces; when the enemy compasses them round about, and poverty has set all help at a distance. Their cries have been heard by the Lord of Sabaoth, and he hath raised up friends to their assistance. They have obtained mercy from God to be "saved in "child-bearing;" they should obtain it from you. If it be true, as the wise man has observed, that "by "a woman came the beginning of sin, and through "her we all die;" no less true it is, that when the Saviour was born, "by a woman came the beginning "of righteousness, and through her we all live." "I am come," says that Saviour himself, "that ye "might have life; and that ye might have it more "abundantly." Evil is swallowed up by good; and it must be through our own fault, if we do not become gainers by our loss. Sublime and beautiful is the exultation of Mary, upon the occasion, over the great enemy—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, "and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. "For he hath regarded the lowliness of his hand-"maiden. For behold from henceforth, all genera-"tions shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty "hath magnified me, and holy is his name: and his "mercy is on them that fear him throughout all "generations."

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Lastly, the persons for whom your benevolence is this day entreated, are not of the number of those wandering and professional mendicants, who meet you, at every turn, with their clamorous and importunate petitions. Sober and laborious, they are to be found at home; quiet, though wretched; visited only by that charity, which, like the influence of heaven's great luminary, penetrates into the deepest recesses, and "nothing is hidden from the heat "thereof." Thither our institution goes to find them, and carries to their own houses the best medical, and every other necessary assistance. By the subscription of a generous public, hospitals have been erected, and are supported, for the same purpose. Without in the least depreciating them, or detracting from their utility, it may yet be truly said, that there are some superior advantages attending the present plan. The wife is not absent from her family, where, though, for a time she cannot herself do much, yet she can direct what is to be done; the husband can go forth to his labour, not an hour of which can well be spared; he is not induced to spend his evenings abroad in public houses, which may occasion his ruin and that of his family; being an eye-witness to the sorrows of his wife, the love between them is increased; and affection for the new-born offspring will stimulate him afresh to industry*.

* See An Account of the Benevolent Institution for the sole purpose of delivering poor married women at their own habitations, printed in the year 1786. By this it appears, that since the establishment, in 1780, 9819 persons have been delivered.

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All possible circumstances appear to concur in recommending to your notice a scheme thus calculated for the preservation of life, the relief of indigence, the honour of marriage, the encouragement of population, and, as a consequence of all, the general welfare of society. It must be approved, as soon as known; and when approved, it will be encouraged. To these poor, but not the less valuable mothers, in the hour of their utmost distress, and sharpest anguish, open your hands, and open them wide. Whatever you bestow, it will be well bestowed, and properly expended. In every sense truly respectable, honourable, and noble are the persons, who have been pleased to take upon themselves the superintendence of the expenditure. Parsimony at this time would be œconomy ill placed indeed. Spare something in the magnificence of your houses and style of living, in the splendour of your furniture, the costliness of your apparel, the luxury of your tables, and your visits to public places; but in your charity spare nothing. On the receipt of your incomes, set aside immediately some certain portion for this purpose. When objects offer, there will be a fund to draw upon; you will give cheerfully, and without grudging; you will always be giving, you will always have something to give: and that which is so given will be returned to you, with increase abundant and eternal, when, in the sight of assembled nations, and all the hosts of heaven, the saying will be verified —"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain "mercy."

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND DEATH OF ABEL;

ON THE

LIFE AND TRANSLATION

OF

ENOCH;

AND ON

THE LIFE OF NOAH.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE compositions of Bishop Horne have been so well known, and so highly esteemed for their warm piety and richness of scriptural allusion, that in presenting these "CONSIDERATIONS" to the public under the sanction of his name, no other recommendation can be necessary than that which the Editor is enabled to give by his reply to two questions, which are usually asked, upon the appearance of a posthumous work, namely, "whether it is genuine, and "whether it was prepared by the author for publication."

The Editor therefore conceives, that he shall have fulfilled his duty to the public on the present occasion by stating, that these Essays are written out in Bishop Horne's own hand, and corrected for the press; and that the MS. has continually remained in the possession of his family, with whose concurrence it is now published.

JUNE, 1812.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND DEATH OF ABEL.

At the head of the noble army of martyrs stands the righteous Abel, the second son of fallen Adam. So early was that harsh but salutary lesson inculcated, *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*[a] His name, implying something *corruptible and transient*, seems to have been predictive of his fate; and it intimates to us, what was afterwards expressed in terms at large by another of the afflicted servants of God—*Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery: he cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.*[b] Like a flower of the field, young Abel sprang up, and flourished.

Fair was his appearance, and sweet the odour of his virtues. But a brother's envy, like a blighting wind, went over him, and smote him to the earth.

[a] Acts, xiv. 22. [b] Job, xiv. 1.

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The days of his pilgrimage were quickly ended, and he hasted away to an abiding city. Disinherited of the earthly paradise, from a wilderness grown over with thorns, he departed to the unfading gardens of everlasting delights. And so the holy Jesus, that King of saints and Prince of martyrs, made but a short stay amongst us in the days of his flesh. The envy of his brethren pursued him even to death: and the fairest flower that ever bloomed on earth, overcharged with rain, and borne down by the stormy tempest, bowed its head and died. Set not your hearts then, O ye children of Adam, upon a long life; nor esteem it as necessarily a blessing. Had it indeed been so, Cain had never survived his righteous brother, nor had the King of righteousness died under forty.

The employment of Abel was that of *keeping sheep:* an employment, we see, nearly as ancient as the world itself, nor esteemed beneath those who were the first favourites of Heaven, and who are now exalted to the highest thrones in the kingdom of glory. And, indeed, where shall we find usefulness, innocence, and pleasure, so met together in any employment, as they are in this? "My life (said Constantine the Great, when at the height of human felicity), "is something more honourable than that of a shep-"herd, but much more troublesome." No one subject hath so frequently engaged the pens of poets, as the felicities of the pastoral life; nay, when they would describe the golden age, and picture to our imaginations a heaven upon earth, they have found no method of doing it to greater advantage, than by representing

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shepherds, in times of peace, plenty, and prosperity, feeding their flocks in verdant pastures, and leading them to living fountains of waters. But chiefly we are to note the use which the wisdom of God hath made of this employment in the holy Scriptures, by transferring the pleasing images which it affords, to the highest and most important truths of religion; while it teaches us how to make them the means of turning our eyes to the mercies and loving-kindnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who nourisheth the souls of the righteous in the pastures of eternal truth, and leadeth them to living fountains of divine consolation. Let no man, then, despise another, for the supposed meanness of his occupation. The shepherd, who discharges his trust conscientiously, may comfort himself with this reflection, that he has the righteous Abel for an example; as also, that to shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, came the first tidings of the birth of a Saviour. And being taught by the Scriptures how to raise his thoughts from things visible to things invisible, he may thus make his business a constant fund of instruction and comfort; and so, after having lived the life, he may pass to the glory of Abel.

In process of time, or *at the end of days*, i. e. at the time appointed of God, *Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof*, an offering *to the Lord;* thereby instructing us, as the law afterwards did the children of *Israel*, that we ought never to appear before the Lord *empty*, or to offer him of that which *costs us nothing*. The prime of our years, the

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flower of our strength, the best of our substance, the first fruits of our increase, should be dedicated and devoted to him, who makes us all we are, and gives us all we have. So shall the benedictions of Heaven descend upon all things around us, and upon ourselves in the use of them; while, by thus presenting our souls and bodies to God, we not only imitate *Abel*, but become followers of Christ, who, by the obedience of his life, and by the sacrifice of his death, offered up himself, the first-born of every creature, the perfection of beauty, and the excellency of power.

This offering of Abel was made in *faith*. *By* FAITH, says the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, *Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.*[c] *The just live by faith*[d]. They conduct their lives, and regulate their actions, by the revealed principles of pardon, acceptance, and glory, promised, through the merits of a Redeemer upon the terms of repentance, faith, and obedience. Upon the strength of these, they live and act in opposition to the world, the flesh, and the devil; looking not at the things which are seen by the bodily eye, but at the things which are not so seen; of the existence and reality of which their faith in the revelations of God affords them a full and sufficient evidence. And thus it is that they, fighting the good fight of faith, and overcoming the world, *believe to the saving of the soul*[e]. The sacrifice offered by Abel, as an expression of his faith, shows his faith to have been in the great sacrifice

[c] Heb. xi. 4. [d] Hab. ii. 4. [e] Heb. x. ult.

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since offered up for the transgressions of all mankind. In the innocent victim, bleeding on the altar, he beheld with the eye of faith, what was afterwards exhibited to that of sense, *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*[f]. And, in this particular, the righteous Abel is a constant and useful monitor to every Christian, who comes into the presence of his heavenly Father, to come with the commemoration, as he did with the prefiguration, of the body and blood of Christ his Saviour. And let the one stir up at least as lively a faith in those who live since the manifestation of the Messiah in the flesh, as the other did in those who lived before it.

By this sacrifice, thus offered in faith, *Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts*[g]. Now, it being a rule in the divine law, that the blood of slain beasts cannot take away sins; and yet Abel obtaining a testimony of his justification by shedding such blood, which was in him an act of faith, and therefore acceptable in the sight of God; from these premises we can draw but one conclusion, viz. that *being justified by faith, he had peace with* God *through* Jesus Christ *our Lord*[h]. It is hardly to be doubted, but that the sign or token of Abel's acceptance was the same vouchsafed upon most occasions afterwards[i], viz. the consumption of the offering, by fire descending from heaven. Hereby it was declared, that the innocent was taken for the guilty, and the sacrifice sustained the vengeance that must otherwise have been inflicted upon the sinner. And hence

[f] John, i. 29. [g] Heb. xi. 4. [h] Rom. v. 1.
[i] See Jortin's *Remarks*, II. 402.

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it is easy to account for the behaviour of the Israelites at the dedication of the temple, who, *when they saw how the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering, and sacrifices—praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*[k]. How there should be a display of eternal mercy in such a scene of *blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke*, does not immediately appear, till we reflect, that by the offering being burnt, the offerer escaped; when the surety suffered, the prisoner went free. And with this view our blessed Lord seems to have addressed himself, in favour of all his disciples, as well as those then present, to the band that came to apprehend him—*If ye seek ME, let* THESE *go their way*[l]. He was to suffer, that we might not suffer; he was to die, that we might live for ever; he was to sustain the vengeance of heaven, that we might be partakers of its mercies; he was to become obnoxious to the curse, that we might inherit the blessing. And therefore the consumption of the sacrifice, which represented him, was a certain indication of the acceptance of the person who offered it, in faith of him and his sufferings. This, it is presumed, *Abel* did, and for that reason, *obtained witness that he was righteous*, God *thus testifying of his gifts*. Abel then, as well as *Abraham, believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*. He was *justified by faith, and not by the deeds of the law*. To these, as performed by the *Jew, God has not respect*, any more than he had to *the offering of Cain;* and for

[k] 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2, 3. [l] John, xviii. 8.

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the same reason. *By* FAITH, *Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain:* by FAITH the *Christian* offers a more acceptable sacrifice than the *Jew.* The same infidelity kept Cain and the Jews out of the kingdom of heaven; the same faith admits Abel and the Christians into that kingdom, through him who alone *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.* Thus, in the persons of these two brothers, whose history is recorded as *an example, for our admonition,* are characterized the two opposite spirits that have ever since divided the world between them, and will continue so to do, till the consummation of all things: that is to say, the humble, obedient, and suffering spirit of faith; and the haughty, rebellious, and persecuting spirit of infidelity. He who would be numbered with the children of God, must copy the example of Abel; he who chooses to have his portion with the seed of the evil One, may *go in the way of Cain.*

Cain slew Abel. A striking specimen of the morality of an infidel! *Faith worketh by love;* where there is no faith, we must expect no love. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous*[m]. Infidelity, then, worketh by envy, concerning which the wise man might well ask—*Who is able to stand before it*[n]*? Through envy of the devil came death into the world*[o]. Through envy, *Cain* murdered *Abel;* and through envy, the Jews murdered the Lord of glory, because their deeds were evil, and his righteous; be-

[m] 1 John, iii. 12. [n] Prov. xxvii. 4. [o] Wisd. ii. 24.

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cause they were rejected, and he was accepted. As Cain did to Abel, so did they to the holy Jesus, to his apostles, and to the members of his Church; and so will the world continue to do to his faithful servants, while the Spirit of their Lord and Master emboldens them, by their words and their works, to *testify*, as he did, *concerning it, that the deeds thereof are evil.* For this reason it is, that St. John, after mentioning the murder of Abel by Cain, and what occasioned it, immediately adds, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the* WORLD *hate* YOU[p]. And let every Christian take care that he fall not after the similitude of their transgression. It is a determined case, that *he who hateth his brother, is a murderer*[q]: it is an unquestionable truth, that he who *envieth* his brother, will soon *hate* him: and it is no less certain, that *the spirit which dwelleth in us lusteth to envy*[r]. How earnestly and fervently, then, ought we to pray, as our excellent Church enjoins us to do, that from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, our good Lord would vouchsafe to deliver us!

The blood of Abel cried from the ground for vengeance against Cain. No cry pierceth the heavens like that of blood, a brother's blood more especially. How long has the blood of *that Just One* been crying, and they who shed it will not yet acknowledge, as the brethren of Joseph were made to do in the day of their calamity, that they *are verily guilty concerning their brother*[s]. As the crime of the Jews bears so near an affinity to that of Cain, the stubborn

[p] 1 John, iii. 13. [q] 1 John, iii. 15. [r] Jam. iv. 5. [s] Gen. xlii. 21.

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sullenness, and inveterate hardness of heart, which it has produced in them, seem to be, in an extraordinary manner, portrayed in his character; and his answer to his Maker, when demanding his brother at his hands, has all the marks of Jewish insolence and contumacy strongly impressed upon it. *The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper?* Again: who can help thus applying to them the expostulation of God with the murderer—*What have ye done? the voice of your brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.* And hath not the very sentence inflicted on Cain been executed upon them likewise in every particular? They are *cursed from the earth which opened her mouth to receive their brother's blood from their hand. The ground,* that once rich and fertile *ground,* no longer *yields to them its strength,* but is become a barren and desolate wilderness, sympathizing, as it were, with their ungodly hearts, which are barren of every good thought, word, and work, and bring forth no fruits of repentance and faith. Upon them, as upon the mountains of Gilboa, there has been *no rain, neither dew from above. The heaven over their heads,* according to the prediction of *Moses, has been brass, and the earth under them iron*[t]. *Thorns only and thistles,* infidelity and blasphemy, covetousness and extortion, have appeared as yet. Seventeen hundred years have passed, since they were *driven out from the presence of Jehovah,* and the light of his countenance; dispersed, like chaff, to

[t] Deut. xxviii. 23.

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the four winds; *fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth*, without priest, or temple, city, or habitation; every attempt to settle them has been blasted; and yet, an indelible *mark* is set upon them by the hand of the Almighty, that none should *extirpate* them: so wonderfully punished, so wonderfully preserved for punishment; and we hope, at last, for mercy; since, *if they abide not still in unbelief*, God *is able to graff them in again*[u]. While, therefore, we pray, as we all ought to do frequently and devoutly, for the coming of that blessed and festal hour, when returning Israel shall acknowledge Jehovah their Redeemer, and *look on him whom they have pierced*[x]: let us not fail, in the mean season, to behold, in these striking examples of the divine vengeance, the sad and forlorn estate of that soul, from which the faith and the love of Christ are departed. *Driven out from the presence of Jehovah*, and deprived of the cheering and enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness, it is doomed to be wretched and disconsolate, in the body, for a few days, upon the earth; soon to pass from thence into the undiscerned regions of darkness and despair; far removed from the paradise of God, the gates of which are shut against it for ever. It will then, alas, perceive itself to be a banished *fugitive and vagabond*, void of every ray of hope and comfort, wishing for death, but sentenced to immortality, amongst horrid ghastly forms of accursed spirits, tormenting it with fearful preludes of its approaching condemnation.—Blessed, therefore, is the

[u] Rom. xi. 23. [x] Zech. xii. 10.

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man, who, yielding up his heart to the obedience of faith, suffers the Spirit of the Holy One to new model his crooked and perverse affections, and to reduce them, as nearly as may be, to that standard of all perfection, *the mind that was in Christ Jesus*, by changing his pride into humility, his envy into love, his wrath into meekness, and his malice into mercy. Blessed is he who remembers the faith and the patience of Abel; who so remembers, as to imitate them: for though his sorrow may be great, it shall introduce him to joy; though his sufferings be heavy, they shall terminate in glory; and when the few and evil days of his pilgrimage are ended, he who is *greater than Abel* shall give him Abel's reward.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND TRANSLATION OF ENOCH.

Nec morti esse locum, sed viva volare
Sideris in numerum, atque alto succedere cœlo.
GEORG. IV. 226.

1. *The Case of Enoch and Elijah.*

It is appointed unto all men once to die. This is the general rule: but we meet with an exception to it in the case of *Enoch*, who was transported from the earthly to the heavenly *Sion*, without passing the valley of the shadow of death interposed between them. The Scripture affords us one more instance of the same kind, that of the prophet *Elijah*, for whom a chariot and horses of fire were sent down from the city of the great King, and who instantly exchanged his prophetic mantle for a robe of glory. Thus it pleased God to vouchsafe the world two rehearsals of the ascension of the holy Jesus; one for the building up of those before the law, the other of those under the law, in the faith of that great and important article: and both, that we of these latter days might admire

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the wisdom of God in foreshowing what hath been accomplished, and adore his mercy and power in the accomplishment of what was foreshowed.

2. *Enoch's Faith.*

If we ask, what it was in *Enoch* that could merit an exemption from the common lot of mortality, the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* will tell us—*By* FAITH *Enoch was translated*[a] from earth to heaven. His faith then was in heaven whither he was translated, and in that blessed Person who only could translate him thither: he was a believer in him who, after having made atonement on the cross for the sins of the world, appeared before the everlasting gates of heaven, and commanded them to be thrown open, for the righteous nation to enter into them, and give thanks unto the Lord their God. The righteousness of the Redeemer, like light from the sun, looked always and reached upwards, to save those who lived by faith before and under the law, as well as downwards, to justify and sanctify believers to the end of time, and nothing was, is, or shall be hid from the influence thereof. *Enoch was translated, that he should not see death,* by faith in him who, because he was to *overcome the sharpness of death,* could therefore *open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.*

3. *His Prophecy.*

But did there a doubt remain as to the object of

[a] Heb. xi. 5.

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Enoch's faith, the prophecy delivered by him to the old world, and recorded by St. *Jude*, were sufficient to dispel it. The subject of the prophecy is, the second advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to take vengeance on the deniers and blasphemers of his holy name. *Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all the ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*[b]. This prophecy of the coming of our Lord to judgement, which is to be his last act, and to close all the dispensations of God to man through a Mediator, necessarily supposes in the person who uttered it, an acquaintance with the steps leading to that awful and final catastrophe, such as the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, inauguration, and kingdom of our Lord, as well as the glorious state of the saints departed, who are to come with him in the clouds of heaven. On these subjects were the thoughts of the prophet employed, and his affections were in heaven long before he himself was translated thither. How ought we then to be continually looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, now that Christ has sustained his offices of *prophet*, *priest*, and *king*, and nothing remains but that we behold him in the character of our *Judge*. Surely it is now, more than ever, the part of a *prophet*, or teacher of the revealed

[b] Jude, 14.

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will of God, to dwell upon the second advent of Messiah, and to paint in the most lively colours the transactions of the approaching day of final retribution; that day when the stoutest heart shall tremble, and the terrors of which nothing but the faith of *Enoch* can enable us to support. Yet who is there among us, that thinks, as he ought to do, on that day, or that faith!

4. *The Testimony that he pleased God.*

The faith of *Enoch* is demonstrated by the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* from another topic, viz. *the testimony he had before his translation that he pleased* God; since *without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must* believe *that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* We may here observe, *first*, that all those persons who are said in the Old Testament to have *pleased God*, to have *kept his commandments*, to have been *righteous*, *holy*, &c. were *believers*, and did what they did through *faith*, as all must do now who hope to be accepted: *secondly*, that the existence of God is a point which man comes to the knowledge of not by *inference*, or *deduction à priori*, but by *faith* in the revelation he has made of himself—*He that cometh to God must believe that he is: thirdly*, that the knowledge of a future state of rewards, and consequently of punishments too, enters into the mind the same way, viz. by *faith*, which, as it is elsewhere said, *cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of* God[c]: that God is *a re-*

[c] Rom. x. 17.

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warder of them that diligently seek him, is to be believed upon the evidence of Revelation; the reward here intended being undoubtedly that of eternal life, to which *Enoch* was translated, and which is *the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord;* and therefore not to be known but by and through him, and the counsels of God concerning him, and us in him, manifested by revelation, written, or traditional, from the beginning. To the wisdom of God, therefore, and not to the wit of man, be all the glory ascribed.

5. *His Walking with God.*

This testimony of *Enoch's pleasing* God, referred to by St. *Paul*, is found Gen. v. 22. and again v. 24. couched in these words *Enoch walked with* God. Such was the effect and evidence of his faith, which saw him who is, otherwise, invisible, ever present to his soul, and set the Lord always before him, as the accurate inspector of all his ways. The blessed consequences of a sense of the divine presence are that fear of the Lord which prevents our offending him, and that love of God which incites us to obey him. A holy reverential awe, tempered with a filial affection, as it dries up the springs of vice, so is it a never failing source of virtue. How easily may the careless Christian account for his frequent falls and relapses, how justly condemn his inattention on this head, by making *Jacob's* reflection. *Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew*—I considered *it not*[d]. How effectually may he repel temptations, by holding

[d] Gen. xxviii. 16.

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forth this shield of faith in the divine omnipresence, as *Joseph* once did against the fiery darts shot from the quiver of the adulteress—*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against* God[e]? Besides, what a gracious and endearing *familiarity* between the Creator and his creature is implied in this phrase, *walking with God!* Persons that are unknown, we pass by, superiors we follow respectfully at a distance, and walk only with acquaintances and friends. *Acquaint thyself then with God*[f], and be of the number of those faithful disciples, of whom the holy Jesus disdains not to say—*I have called you friends*[g]; even as *Abraham* also was called[h] the friend of God. These are they who *walk with their God*, and take sweet counsel with him, as a man does with his friend, in the way of pious dispositions, and holy duties, which are so many steps and stages in the road to heaven. And while God speaks to the soul by his word, and she to him by prayer and thanksgiving; while he says, *Seek ye my face*, and she answers, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek;* the conversation is kept up, the fatigue of the journey is not perceived, and the years of her pilgrimage, like those which *Jacob* served for *Rachel, seem unto her but a few days*, for the love that she has to her guide, her companion, her friend, and her God. Him she consults in all her difficulties, whose *testimonies are her delight and her counsellors:* to him she addresses herself for the relief of all her wants, certain of never being rejected, or denied any thing that is good and proper for her: and him she

[e] Gen. xxxix. 9. [f] Job, xxii. 21. [g] John xv. 15. [h] James ii. 23.

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continually praises, with the voice of joy and gratitude, for all his wonderful mercies and loving kindnesses. How then can the Christian soul ever be *alone;* or how can she ever be *idle?* With these comforts and encouragements she walks on in the way of God's commandments, pressing forward in the course of a holy obedience, from one degree of perfection to another. The world is not suffered to lead the way, or to intrude as a companion, but follows behind as a servant. If she falls, she is not cast away, for God upholds her with his right hand, by giving unto her the grace of a speedy and hearty repentance. And thus with cheerfulness and constancy she goes from strength to strength, till, having passed the valley of death, and ascended the holy hill, she appears before the God of Gods in the heavenly Sion. Whoever *walks with God* in this manner, will have the testimony given to *Enoch*, that he *pleased him.* For so the blessed Jesus, who walked in the way of life, without ever turning aside to the right hand or to the left, *before his translation had this testimony that he pleased God*, several times repeated. At his baptism, when he came up out of the water, *lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*[1]. Again, upon mount *Tabor*, when as an earnest of his approaching *translation*, the glory of his eternal Godhead broke through the veil of his humanity that was cast over it, diffusing itself from his soul to his body, and from thence to his garments, till he became ex-

[1] Matt. iii. 17.

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ceeding glorious, his face shining like the sun, and his raiment white as the light; then from the excellent glory came there a sound, as of the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him*[k]. In like manner, we have it recorded, *John* xii. 28. that no sooner did he request such a testimony, standing upon earth in the streets of *Jerusalem*, but he was answered immediately in thunder from heaven—*Father, glorify thy name! Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* And to show that his death, as well as his life, was accepted, a sacrifice well pleasing unto the Lord, when he yielded up the ghost on the cross, the veil of the temple, which parted the sanctuary from the holy of holies, rending asunder from the top to the bottom, gave evident demonstration, that the communication was opened between earth and heaven, or, as the apostle expresses it, *a way made into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*[l]. Let the Christian, then, who desires to pass from this dark scene of sorrows into the joys and glories of the celestial city, remember, that before his *translation* thither from the grave and gate of death, he must have *this testimony, that he pleased God*; he must have a good conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost that he has *walked with God* in the way of his commandments and ordinances. On this testimony let him build his *assurance*, and he shall do well.

[k] Matt. xvii. 5. [l] Heb. x. 19.

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6. *His Translation.*

The reward of *Enoch's* faith, thus working by love unto obedience, was an immediate translation to the kingdom of glory. *He was not*, says *Moses*, *for* God *took him: he was not found*, says St. *Paul*, *for* God *had translated him.* And here was of necessity a difference between the copy and its great original. *Enoch*, being designed to represent the great prophet more particularly in the article of his ascension into heaven, and not in those of his sufferings or resurrection, *was translated, that he should not see death;* whereas Christ was to *taste death for every man* (*Enoch* among the rest) and so to ascend into his glory. But although he *tasted death*, he *saw no corruption;* and being quickly *raised again from the dead, he dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him:* nor is he any longer *found* on earth, *because God has translated him. Why seek ye the living among the dead?* said the angel to the women at the sepulchre; *he is not here, he is risen.* Henceforth know we him no more after the flesh. He is no longer the lowly Jesus of *Nazareth* on earth, but the triumphant Lord of glory in heaven; and men see him not again, till the time appointed of the Father for the accomplishment of *Enoch's* prophecy, when he cometh in the clouds to judgement, attended with ten thousands of saints. And then, what was foreshowed by the translation of *Enoch*, and fulfilled in the ascension of the natural body of Christ, shall be brought to pass likewise in his mystical body, the church, and the members thereof. They who sleep in the dust

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of the earth, shall awake, and arise, and be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with him. They *shall not be found* in the ruins of a burning world, because God shall have *translated* them to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. This is but the completion of that great work begun in them by the Spirit of God in this life, renewing and transforming their souls by hearty repentance, lively faith, and fervent charity; by prayer, and fasting, and almsdeeds; by holy mourning, and pious meditation; by reading, hearing, and communicating, thus training them up by the means of grace to the hope of glory; *delivering them*, as the apostle phrases it, *from the power of darkness, and* translating *them into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*[m]. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in this first *translation* from sin to righteousness, the sure pledge and earnest of the second from dust to glory. Thus have we the Christian life, and the glorious reward that is to crown it, set before us in those few, but significant words—ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD, AND WAS TRANSLATED.

[m] Col. ii. 14.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON

THE LIFE OF NOAH.

1. *His Name.*

No sooner was there a son born to *Lamech*, but he gave him the name of *Noah*, a word involving in it the ideas of *rest* and *consolation*, at the same time assigning the reason in a prophecy relating to him—*This same shall* comfort *us concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed*[a]. The great object of the wishes and hopes of the faithful in the ancient church ever was the removal of that curse brought by sin upon the earth, the destruction and dissolution of which it effected in the days of *Noah*. He was ordained to be the restorer of mankind, the head and father of the new world, when it should arise out of the ruins of the old. And this seems to have been the accomplishment of *Lamech's* prediction, viz. the removal of that dreadful effect of the *curse* upon the

[a] Gen. v. 29.

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ground, and the restoration of the human race, but more especially of the *holy line*, from whence was to spring, in the fulness of time, *the desire of all nations*[b], and *the hope of all the ends of the earth*[c]. Vain, without him, were all merely human comforts and comforters, because they could not reach to the saving of the soul. This great salvation, exclusive of which every other was but a temporary reprieve, the date of which must expire, and the original sentence take place, they could only prefigure and shadow forth, *until the seed should come, to whom the promise was made*[d], and in whom alone it could be fulfilled. Of the blessed Jesus may it be said emphatically, and in every sense of the words;—*This same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands.* And thus he declares himself the accomplisher of this and all other the like prophecies, to as many as would receive and acknowledge him, and follow his directions—*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will* refresh *you*, and *give you* rest[e]: *rest* from sin, by forgiving it; *rest* from sorrow, by the joy consequent thereupon; *rest* from toil and trouble, by a holy and happy death: *Blessed*, saith the Spirit, *from henceforth are the dead which die in the Lord; for they* rest *from their labours*[f]: their bodies repose in peace, and their souls are entered into that *rest* which *remaineth for the people of God*[g]. However the curse might be partially and for a time removed by the subsiding of the

[b] Hag. ii. 7. [c] Ps. lxv. 5. [d] Gal. iii. 19. [e] Matt. xi. 28. [f] Rev. xiv. 13. [g] Heb. iv. 9.

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flood, it shall not be finally taken off, until the overflowings of ungodliness are chased away for ever, and the new heavens and new earth arise, *Phœnix*-like, from the ashes of the old. There righteousness shall establish her everlasting throne; and as there will be no more *sin*, so St. *John* assures us, there will be *no more curse*[h]. Whatever, therefore, be our lot in this world, however hard the curse, with its consequences, may for the present bear upon us, let us be of good courage, continually saying within ourselves of Jesus, what *Lamech* said of *Noah*—*This same shall comfort us.*

2. *The Times in which he lived.*

In order to form a right judgement of the character of *Noah*, it is necessary to take a view of the times in which he lived, virtue never appearing to so great advantage, as when seen in company with the difficulties it has to combat. These, in the case before us, were as many and as great as the wickedness of man could make them, which was now at its utmost degree of exaltation, and called for that dreadful manifestation of divine vengeance, the universal deluge. When men multiplied upon the earth, sins multiplied in proportion. A multitude soon grows ungovernable, licentious, and luxurious.

3. *Sensuality of the Antediluvians.*

It is remarkable that our Lord, speaking of this generation, chiefly insists upon their *carnality* or *world-*

[h] Rev. xxii. 3.

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ly-mindedness, as the door at which all other abominations entered. *In the days of Noah*, says he, *they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage*[1]; thereby intimating to us, that when we see a people wholly immersed in the cares of the world and the pleasures of sense, regardless of that heavenly country to which they are travelling, it is a sure sign of approaching destruction. So was it in the days of *Noah;* so was it in the days of *Lot*; and so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. How certainly then may we know that it is the last time, and that the judge standeth before the door! Let every reader of this examine the state of his own heart in this particular, *and take heed lest at any time it be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day*, the day either of particular or general judgement, *come upon him unawares*[k].

4. *Inter-marriages of Believers with Infidels.*

Another thing which contributed not a little to disseminate corruption through the antediluvian world, and to hasten its destruction, was the practice of inter-marrying, which obtained between the believing race of *Seth*, called in Scripture, *the sons of* God, and the infidel progeny of *Cain*, styled the *daughters of men. The sons of* God *saw the daughters of men, that they were fair;* so their mother saw the forbidden fruit, that it also was *fair*. Both *saw*, and both *fell* by seeing. The eyes are the windows, at which, when

[1] Matt. xxiv. 38. [k] Luke xxi. 34.

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left carelessly open, concupiscence enters as a thief, disarms the guard, and rifles the heart of its purity. They *saw, and took them wives of all which they* thus *chose* by the judgement of the sight, and not that of the understanding, becoming, herein, *like to horse and mule which have no understanding*, and are therefore guided only by sense. Thus these daughters of *Cain* proved to the sons of *Seth* what the *Moabitish* women were afterwards to the children of *Israel*, and what women of bad principles always have been and always will be to men of good ones, who are no wiser than to contract alliances with them in their state of error and delusion. With infinite wisdom, therefore, did the law of God provide against this evil, by limiting the people to their own tribes, and forbidding them to inter-marry with heathens, and aliens from the commonwealth of *Israel*. And let every Christian beware of being unequally yoked together with *unbelievers*, or persons of *idolatrous*, or *schismatical* communions; since neither the wisdom of the wisest, nor the strength of the strongest man was able to ward off the sad consequences of such unnatural conjunctions. But, to strike at the root of the disorder, let him be instant in prayer, that God would turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, to look on him whom, by their wantonness, they have so often pierced, till the flames of unlawful desires are extinguished by rivers of penitential tears; so shall he become master of himself, and be enabled to enter into that holy estate "which Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought in *Cana* of *Galilee*, reverently, discreetly, advisedly,

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soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained[1]."

5. *Corrupt Offspring of these Inter-marriages.*

From the marriages of the sons of *Seth* with the daughters of *Cain*, sprang a race of men, who, whatever they were as to stature, became overgrown monsters of apostasy, impiety, and iniquity; so that in process of time the earth was totally overspread with *corruption*, and *violence* of all kinds; till every good principle being eradicated from the hearts of men, their thoughts and imaginations were *only evil continually*. While principles remain, practices may be altered and amended; but, those once gone, there remains no farther hope of a reformation, because there is then nothing to ground one upon, no hold upon the consciences of men, whereby to bring them round to the point from which they have wandered. A bowl that is furnished with a bias, although it deviate from its course, may return into it again; but one that has none must continue to deviate, so long as it continues to move. Let this be a warning to all who would avert the judgements of God, and who wish to see returning righteousness once more visit and bless our land, to spare no time or pains in fixing Christian principles in the hearts of those for whom they are concerned, as governors, pastors, parents, tutors, or masters.

6. *The withdrawing the Holy Spirit, and God's repenting that he had made man.*

The enormity and universality of the antediluvian

[1] Matrimonial Service.

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crimes at length rendered it to no purpose for the *Spirit* of God, whether by outward reproofs and admonitions, or by inward checks of conscience, to *strive* any longer *with man;* so entirely, in body and soul, was he given up to the *flesh*[m] and the lusts thereof. And as the conversion of a sinner is said to cause joy in heaven, so here, to show the exceeding love of God towards us, and his unwillingness that any should perish, he is represented as *repenting that he had made man, and being grieved at the heart*[n]. He whom *David* may be supposed to personate, when he says in spirit—*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law*[o]; and who once wept over wretched *Jerusalem*, at the prospect of her impending woes, is described as looking upon an apostate world with what we cannot express but in terms borrowed from human affections. And this is done with an infinitely greater propriety than some imagine, who do not consider, that in his person who, from the beginning, presided over and conducted the affairs of his church, the two natures of God and *man* were to be, and in due time actually were, united, he being made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted. As therefore the husbandman, after all his care and pains bestowed upon a favourite field sowed with the choicest seed, when he beholds, at the time of harvest, a crop, not of corn for the granary, but of thorns for the fire, repents him of the time, and labour, and seed he has expended, and is grieved at the heart to find so ill a return made him; such are

[m] Gen. vi. 3. [n] Ibid. 6. [o] Ps. cxix. 136

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we to conceive the concern of our heavenly Father, the great husbandman of his church, to be, when having sowed therein the seed of his word, and watered it with his heavenly benediction, it produces vices for punishment, instead of virtues for reward; or, to speak in the language which he himself uses by one of his prophets, when he has *done all that can be done to his vineyard, and looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brings forth wild grapes*[b]. When this is the case, *it repents* Jehovah, *and he is grieved at the heart.* Thus an all-merciful God is pleased to represent himself as feeling for us, what we, alas, do not feel for ourselves, or for one another.

7. *The Flood denounced.*

And now the awful period approached, when the nature of sin was to appear to all the world by its effects and consequences upon the earth and all that lived and moved thereon, their total destruction being resolved upon in the counsels of heaven. *The end of all flesh,* says God, *is come before me. I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air—I will destroy them with the earth*[c]. But, that the Almighty might be justified in his saying, and overcome when his proceedings shall be submitted to the inspection of men and angels at the last day; that none of the antediluvian sinners might then plead ignorance, and complain that they perished for want of warning; he sent not the flood immediately

[b] Isaiah, v. 4. [c] Gen. vi. 7, and 13.

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upon the earth, but gave man a long notice of its coming—*Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years*[d]. So when the apostasy of the *Gentile* Christian church shall be completed, and the measure of her iniquities filled up; when faith shall scarcely be found, and charity shall be frozen at the fountain; in a word, when *all flesh* shall again have *corrupted his way upon the earth*[e]; then shall *the end of all flesh* again *come before God*, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be finally destroyed; as the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, read in our churches, do admonish us from day to day. Notwithstanding which, *as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man,—they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away.* I may add, as it is with the world, so is it also with nations and individuals. They have their times and their seasons of trial and probation, and they have their warnings; after which the axe is laid to the root of the tree, and nothing in heaven or in earth can stay, for one moment, the uplifted hand of justice from striking the fatal stroke.—Open, then, blessed Lord, our eyes, that we may see the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid for ever from our sight.

8. *Noah in Favour with God.*

In these worst of times *Noah found grace in the eyes of* Jehovah[f]. Human favour is hardly obtained, and easily lost; or, at best, like wine exposed to the sun

[d] Gen. vi. 3 [e] Ibid. vi. 12. [f] Gen. vi. 8.

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and air, soon loses its flavour, and grows vapid in the cask: while the favour of God is acquired by only seeking our own happiness; its relish improves with time; and *the fruit of this vine* shall be *drunk new in the kingdom of heaven*, to all eternity. Divine favour is better than all the abundance a man can possess, or covet; nay, *better than life itself*. It makes holy, and it makes happy. The world cannot do the former; and therefore fails in the latter.

9. *Just and perfect in his Generation.*

Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation[g]. He was, as the apostle tells us, *heir of the righteousness which is by faith*[h], a believer in him, who *justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith*[i], *if through that faith they work righteousness*[k], as *Noah* did, being *perfect*, or *upright in his generation: perfect*, not as the holy Jesus was *perfect*, or as *the spirits of just men* are to be *made perfect* in heaven, but with such perfection as man can attain unto in this his state of pilgrimage, not by sinless obedience to the law of works, but by repentance and faith, by pardon and grace, and by a service acceptable to God in Jesus Christ, who forgives us our sins, and heals our infirmities, and leads us into the paths of righteousness, and enables us to walk therein. Thus was *Noah perfect in his generation*, or in the age in which he lived:

Among the faithless faithful only he;

persevering in his integrity, when all around him was

[g] Gen. vi. 9. [h] Heb. xi. 7. [i] Rom. iii. 30. [k] Heb. xi. 33.

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infidelity and idolatry, intemperance and debauchery, riot, violence, and confusion; not saving himself by flight, but fighting the good fight and conquering; not going out of the world, but living uncorrupt in it; a lily among thorns, diffusing its sweets in the wilderness; a light burning and shining in blackness of darkness. Therefore was he the favourite of Heaven, and the delight of the Most High, who was pleased to constitute him the representative deliverer and restorer of the human race. *Noah* (says the son of *Sirach*) *was found perfect and righteous in the time of wrath, he was taken in exchange for the world; therefore was he left as a remnant unto the earth, when the flood came*[1]. Let not then the Christian, whose lot it is to live in the midst of a crooked and adulterous generation, plead the impossibility of withstanding the force of custom and example: but let him, like *Noah*, buckle on the Christian panoply, and watch, and pray, and so enter into the battle; and then, like him, he shall overcome, and triumph in the name of the Lord his God, on that day when the world of the ungodly shall sink into the devouring flames, and be no more heard of for ever and ever.

10. *A Preacher of Righteousness.*

Noah is styled by St. *Peter a preacher of righteousness.* Not content to save himself from that untoward generation, he strove continually to save others also, by declaring to them their sin, and their danger, and calling them to repentance and amendment of

[1] Ecclus. xliv. 17.

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life. The righteousness he preached was doubtless the same that he himself possessed and practised, that is to say, the righteousness of faith working by love unto obedience. Thus the executions of judgement are preceded by the messengers of mercy; and *the words of the wise* are employed as sharp *goads*[m], to awaken the world from that insensibility which, unless removed, is to the soul what a lethargy is to the body, the sure symptom and forerunner of death. Christian ministers, who live in these latter days, which answer to those of *Noah*, have in him a noble pattern of what they ought to be and to do, viz. to work righteousness themselves, and preach it to all the world. They may not, perhaps, have better success than he had. They may be despised, and they may be forgotten by men. But they will be honoured and had in remembrance in His sight, who hath promised not to forget their work and labour of love. Their memorial is in heaven, whither their works do follow them, and their reward is with the Most High, to be given them in the day of eternal recompense, when the Christian shall be the character marked out for preferment, and the faithful priest shall be acknowledged by the King of kings.

11. *Builds the Ark.*

Besides the sermons delivered from time to time by *Noah* to those around him, he preached one of a very extraordinary nature to all the inhabitants of the earth; for such we may properly call the ark built by

[m] Eccles. xii. 11.

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him, the report of which, considering the number of years it was in building, went forth, doubtless, into all lands, and was every where the subject of conversation, long before the flood came. *By faith*, says the apostle, *Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he* condemned the world, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*[a]. The assertion in this passage, that *Noah* by *building the ark condemned the world*, implies that *the world* were acquainted with that transaction, which, being a public and notorious testimony of his faith, will at the last day arise up in the judgement against their infidelity, and prevent their putting in the plea of ignorance. The strength of *Noah's* faith in the warning given him by God upon this occasion appears from the powerful opposition it had to encounter and overcome. To one of a philosophic turn of mind, the difficulty of procuring a sufficient number of oceans for the purpose of deluging the earth would immediately occur. The seeming impossibility of constructing a vessel, within the given dimensions, which should be capable of containing the creatures destined for the preservation of their respective species, together with the various provisions necessary for their support, would be a formidable objection in the mechanical way. The care, the labour, the time, and the expense requisite to go through with a work of that kind, would afford no very agreeable prospect: and then the circumstance of being shut up in such a

[a] Heb. xi. 7.

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place with such company could not but be terrifying. But, above all, it must have been a very severe trial, and much steadiness and resolution it must have required, to withstand the incessant scoffs and insults of the antediluvian free-thinkers, who, without all doubt, would be frequently assembling to see how the work went on, expressing, perhaps, how very ambitious they were of having the honour to be present when the lions and tigers should be hunted into the ark, and minutely inquisitive as to the precise method in which it was proposed to navigate the vessel, thus filled, over the mountains. In some such manner as this, it is highly probable, that modern test and touchstone of all truth, RIDICULE, was applied to *Noah* and his undertaking. The conduct of the patriarch, upon this occasion, shows us what ours ought to be in like circumstances.—*According to all that God commanded him, so did he*[*]. Being once well assured, upon good and sufficient evidence, what the will of God is, we should suffer no appearances of things, or opinions of men, to discourage and prevent us from accomplishing it, to the utmost of our ability. The only question to be asked is—Hath God spoken it. This being resolved in the affirmative, the soul is to rest on his word and promise, as an anchor sure and stedfast, from which she should never suffer herself to be parted by all the doubts, difficulties, and objections in the world. In simplicity and godly sincerity let her do what she is commanded to do, waiting with patience the appointed

[*] Gen. vi. 22.

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time, and in the end, God will be found true, though all men are liars. Upon this principle *Noah* proceeded. By FAITH he built the ark, according to the divine directions, of a proper and durable wood, and of the dimensions prescribed, with apartments for his own family, and for all the creatures it was designed to contain, as also for the provisions that would be requisite; a door was placed in the side for ingress and egress, and a window to transmit the light of heaven to all within: the whole being covered over within and without, with an oily bituminous substance, to fence it against the waters. And thus the holy Jesus, the comforter of his chosen, the deliverer and restorer of the human race from sin and death, builds the ark of his church of the incorruptible and immortal souls of the righteous, fitted and prepared for the purpose by salutary discipline, and joined together by love in the unity of the Spirit. In it are many mansions suited to the different degrees and orders appointed, and provisions for all the possible wants of Christians during the voyage of human life. There is admission for all who will come in; while *the long-suffering of* God *waits* as once it did *in the days of Noah;* and, on all who do come in, the light of divine truth and saving knowledge shines from above, through the ministration of the word; while the watchful providence and all-shadowing protection of a merciful God are as a wall of defence, to the preserving evermore their souls and bodies from all evil, and from all sin, from the repeated assaults of their spiritual enemy, and from the horrors and torments of everlasting death. By this great work,

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the building the ark of the Christian church, Christ and his apostles condemned the infidelity of the *Jews*, who were soon after swept away by the *Roman* armies, the Christians then in *Jerusalem* being first called forth, and preserved in the little city of *Pella*. The same testimony ever hath been, and to the end of time ever will be borne against the infidelity of the world, by faithful ministers raised up in their several generations, for the edification of the church of God; who, unmoved by the arguments of sensualists, and the scoffs of atheists, steadily and uniformly carry on the great work they have taken in hand, through faith in the revelations of God concerning the destruction of the world and the salvation of the church. Let every clergyman consider whether he is bearing this testimony, and every layman whether he is giving heed to it.

12. *The Creatures come to the Ark.*

All things being now prepared, and *Noah* having finished his testimony, a new and strange set of witnesses appear to condemn the infidelity of the antediluvian word. The birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, not only the tractable and domestic, but the most wild and savage species of them, as if sensible of the impending calamity, and warned to flee from the wrath to come, assemble by pairs and sevens round the ark, as the only place of refuge; and, a way being prepared for them, they enter in and dwell there, in perfect obedience to *Noah*, and in as perfect peace and harmony with each other. In that happy day when *Adam*, the first formed father of the world,

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reigned king in *Eden*, all the creatures were subject to him, and lived at unity among themselves. Rebellion and discord, driven down from heaven to hell by the all-conquering sword of Michael, were then confined to their proper place. They had not, as yet, approached the gates of Paradise, or found their way into the new world. Man was at peace with God, and therefore the creation was at peace with man; and even brutes did not bite and devour one another. The enmity afterwards introduced by sin subsided, in the case before us, for a season; the sovereignty over the creatures originally vested in *Adam*, the father of the world, was put into the hands of *Noah* the restorer of it, and the halcyon days of *Eden* came over again in the ark. Thus ought it to be in that other ark, the Christian church, built by the bessed Jesus for the salvation of all, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*. The enmity subsisting between these was to be abolished, and to cease for ever, the moment they entered the holy doors of the sanctuary by the sacrament of baptism. *What* God *had once cleansed* by the washing of regeneration was no longer to be *called common or unclean*, as St. *Peter* was admonished by the vision of the mystic sheet, in which, as in the ark, were *all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air*[p], met together, without any difference or distinction; in order to convince him, that the *Gentiles*, whose tempers and dispositions in their state of heathenism were represented by the instincts,

[p] Acts x. 12.

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properties, and qualities of the wild and unclean creatures, were now taken into the ark of the church, and that therefore he was not from henceforth to *call any* man *common or unclean*[q]. God is no respecter of persons, and in Christ Jesus there is no distinction of age or nation, sex or condition. All who enter into the church, therefore, should put off the prejudices and prepossessions, the enmities and animosities against each other, arising from these and the like causes, and live quietly and peaceably together in their habitations. That such an event as this was to take place *Isaiah* foretold in terms literally descriptive of the state of things in the ark.—*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain*[r]. This prophecy was fulfilled in the early days of the church, when Christians were every where known by the blessed change wrought in their tempers, and by the love they bare to each other: when, coming to the ark at the call of the true Noah, they forgot their natural fierceness, intemperance, lust, and every other savage and unclean disposition, and became *new creatures*, conformed, in meekness, to the *Lamb* of God, in pu-

[q] Acts, x. 28. [r] Isaiah, xi. 6.

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rity, to the holy *Dove*. But if this be CHRISTIANITY, whither, ah, whither must we go to find it! Shall we find it among the numberless armies of *most Christian, most Catholic, most Apostolic, and Faith-defending* kings, slaughtering one another, by thousands and ten thousands, in the field of battle? Shall we find it in courts, or in cities, among clergy, or laity, supplanting and overreaching each other for a larger share of the pleasures and gratifications of sense, which preferment and gold are to put them in possession of? When we have looked abroad for it, should we have looked in vain, let us look into our own hearts, and see if we can find it there. If we can, happy are we. If otherwise, let us remember, that in the same hand are the hearts of men and the instincts of animals. He who caused lions and oxen, wolves and lambs, to live quietly and lovingly together in the ark, he it is who maketh men to be of one mind in an house; who maketh the new Jerusalem to be a city at unity with itself; who maketh a family a little model of that city; and fashioneth a heart to the still more minute resemblance of such a family, where all is obedience, and peace, and love.

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AN APOLOGY

FOR

CERTAIN GENTLEMEN

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ASPERSED IN

A LATE ANONYMOUS PAMPHLET:

WITH

A short POSTSCRIPT concerning another Pamphlet, lately published by the Rev. Mr. HEATHCOTE.

EXODUS, XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

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PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

BETWEEN the years 1750 and 1760, there were at the University of Oxford a set of Gentlemen, whose studies in Divinity and Natural Philosophy procured them the name of *Hutchinsonians*. They were then, and are still (though not so much as formerly), spoken against with more than ordinary contempt and acrimony; as if they were the most mistaken in their opinions, and the most dangerous in their attempts, of any men that ever infested the Christian church: which being so strange a thing in an age tender to all persuasions, and affecting universal candour, there must have been something very new and singular in the case, to have raised such an unaccountable alarm. Even archbishop Secker (then bishop of Oxford) who certainly was a good and charitable man, had his prejudices against them; which he expressed in a Charge to his clergy at a visitation; but it is now pretty well known, that his opinion was greatly altered upon this subject, long before the time of his death.

Upon these Gentlemen a name was imposed very unfairly, because it marked them out as a *party;* a bad thing in itself; and in consequence of which some are made answerable for the faults of others. The whole affair is

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curious; and in justice calls for a more impartial examination; such as it may possibly meet with in these times, when the outrageous wickedness of the world has brought all honest and good men nearer together; and united them in one great struggle against barbarians, who are the sworn enemies of truth, wisdom, and humanity.

Great offence was taken against the Hutchinsonians, because they expressed their doubts in regard to some commonly received opinions in Natural Philosophy. In this there could be no great sin: there are no articles of faith in Natural Philosophy; except it be this one, that God was the maker of the world. The world itself is open to all; and a very difficult subject it is; about which learned men will differ after all their inquiries; and they should be indulgent to the errors, or reputed errors, of each other, as they affect to be in higher subjects. The best of Sir Isaac Newton's friends, and the most capable of following him in his speculations, have had, and still have, their doubts; and those of no small importance. He was accused of introducing the old, useless doctrine of *occult qualities:* he provided against it by his *Æther;* but for this he is blamed more than ever. The learned Professor of Edinburgh, who has lately done so much service to the public by unveiling the darkest and blackest conspiracy that ever disgraced the annals of the world, finding that this æther has had its share in the greatest errors of the time, calls it a whim, invented in an *unhappy hour*, when its author was under provocation; by which he *paved the way for much of the atomical philosophy* (the atheistic Materialism) of the moderns*. The fact, it is to be feared, is too much according to the learned Professor's report, how ill soever

* See Proofs of a Conspiracy, &c. by J. Robison, p. 484, 3d Edit.

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it may agree with reason: but let it be as it will, it seems to be a worse blot than any Hutchinsonian ever cast upon the memory of Newton. This accident is to be lamented; because his *Æther* has been thought to lessen the objection against his *Qualities*, and to give his whole philosophy a nearer alliance to the real powers of nature, particularly to those which discover themselves to us in electricity: on which consideration, many philosophers who certainly are not atheists, would have been glad to keep it, and make the most of it. If Newton suffers under abuses and ill reports, well may the name of Hutchinson be expected to labour under a load of reproach and misrepresentation. That he was without exception, the gentlemen who approved his principles never thought. They well knew that his doctrines wanted a great deal of sifting; though his general principles were good, and will stand the test of discussion so long as men shall be inclined to dispute, that is, to the end of the world.

Things, we know, are not to be voted right or wrong from their alliance to *persons*: but let any wise and learned man consider soberly the character of Bishop Horne, such as it was when he was a young Master of Arts; and he cannot but conclude, there must have been something very great, and very inviting, in the doctrines which could engage so much of the attention of so excellent a man: and though we shall be told perhaps, with a view to his justification, that time changed his opinions; it does not appear, that he ever departed from any single doctrine defended in this book: therefore we are confident the republication of it can do no harm. Some young students, of whom their friends may justly conceive great hopes, having heard that such a cause was once pleaded by such a man, and being not able to procure the book, wish for an opportunity of seeing what he then said, and of judging of it for themselves: which liberty

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no man will deny them. If they should be told, that the controversy is now *out of date*, we can assure them that it is not; and that no time will lessen the importance of the doctrines then disputed and defended. Some will always be found, who will never *like* them. If infidels and sceptical critics know their interest as such, they will expect no good to their cause from the imitators of Bishop Horne; who will teach them a forcible way of reasoning, against which no infidel will be able to keep his ground. Among many excellent things here to be found, nothing hurtful is intermixed; nothing contrary to good sense, sound learning, or the faith of the church of England. Let no man, therefore, who loves the church or the government (which God preserve!) be afraid of any harm from such young men as may be struck with the matter of this pamphlet. They will make good subjects, good churchmen, and good Christians: and their learning, if they should be diligent, will give them a rank above the common rate of scholars; for they will not ramble in their reading, as those scholars are too apt to do who have no certain objects before them. If their objects are fixed, none of their time will be lost; and, if those objects are great and valuable, beyond all others, and partly new, or placed in a new light, their curiosity will rise, and their affections be strongly interested; and from such a beginning they may hereafter be great, and useful, and good men, such as are now much wanted in the world. We are at this time under great alarm: infidelity, always destructive to itself and others, hath lately arisen under a new and hideous form in France, like a dæmon from the infernal pit; armed with new weapons, and animated with new malignity; to spread disorder and ruin over the whole world. Who would not rejoice, if old truth and good learning could be seen to rise up in England, under some new and attractive form, to awaken and invite the indifferent, to enlighten the ignorant; to

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add wisdom to the wise, and strength to the active? O let not this be a vain vision! It might, and it would be realized, if the truth, and learning, and piety displayed in this *Apology*, were to prevail and become fashionable in this kingdom.

May 3d, 1799.

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AN APOLOGY, &c.

It is observed of Mr. Hooker, by the author of his life, that one of the sharpest things that ever fell from his pen in controversy was the following reproof of his adversary—"Your next argument," says he to him, "consists of railing and reasons: to "your railing I say nothing; to your reasons I say "what follows." This sentence I am obliged to adopt as a rule of my conduct upon the present occasion; the author I am now concerned with having mixed with his arguments a great deal of bitterness and abuse, which must do as little credit to himself as they can do service to his cause. He gives us to understand, p. 37, that he is in full expectation of being heartily abused in return; though how this would in any sort justify him, it may not be so easy to determine. But I have no occasion for that kind of artillery, and have besides learned a lesson, to which he seems as yet a stranger, that "the wrath "of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Therefore, in the words of the excellent Hooker—"To his railing I say nothing; to his reasons I say "what follows."

But first I must beg leave to take notice of the

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name *Hutchinsonian*, an appellation frequently bestowed upon me by this author, who, p. 15, supposes, "Mr. Wetherell would take it ill, if he was "not complimented as one of Mr. Hutchinson's dis-"ciples." What reason he had for supposing so I cannot tell, since neither Mr. Wetherell, nor myself, nor any of our acquaintance, desire to be complimented as the disciples of any man. Not that we are *nullius addicti jurare in verba magistri;* for one is our master, even Christ. We are members of THE CHURCH, which from the first has always gloried in the name of Christian, as expressing her unity with Christ, and in that of Catholic, as distinguishing her from all classes and clans of heretics. That we have read Mr. Hutchinson's books is certain; and, if his adversaries had done the same, many of their objections had never been made. That we think ourselves obliged to him for some excellent interpretations of Scripture is likewise certain. If the gentleman will confute any of them, we will give them up: if he will confute the whole, the whole shall be given up. But is it not hard measure, that, when a clergyman only preaches the doctrines, and enforces the duties of Christianity from the Scriptures, his character shall be blasted, and himself rendered odious, by the force of a name, which, in such cases, always signifies what the imposers please to mean, and the people to hate? There are many names of this kind now in vogue. If a man preaches Christ, that he is the end of the law, and the fulness of the Gospel—"You need not mind him, he is a

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"Hutchinsonian!" If he mentions the assistance and direction of the Holy Spirit, with the necessity of prayer, mortification, and taking up the cross—"O, he is a Methodist!" If he talks of the divine right of episcopacy, and the power of the keys, with a word concerning the danger of schism—"Just going over to Popery!" And, if he teaches passive obedience to King George—"You may depend upon it, he is a Pretender's man!" The truth of the matter is, many things may be ridiculed under false titles, which it would not be quite so decent to laugh at under their true ones; as an affront may be safely put upon a person in masquerade, which would produce a duel, if offered to him *in propriâ personâ*. But through evil report and good report lies the road of a Christian. For a DECEIVER he must be content to pass, till a resurrection to immortality shall demonstrate him to be none, and wisdom be justified of all her children.

As to our being a sect, or schismatical combination of separatists from other Christians of the church of England, we do most sincerely disavow the name and the thing; being fully persuaded of the necessity of being in the unity of the church, to obtain salvation. In the communion of the church of England, therefore we intend to die. To every zealous friend and promoter of the interest of Christ, the Scriptures, and the church, we are ready, cheerfully and joyfully, to give the right hand of fellowship, whether he reads Mr. Hutchinson or not; though we cannot but esteem it our duty humbly and meekly to recom-

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mend to others what has been of service to us in our searches after divine knowledge. If we are found fault with for not mixing so much with the world as some choose to do, and not spending our time as the world does, we can only say, that it is written—"Be not conformed to this world;"—that life is short, and time precious; and that the hours which we kill here, will rise with us from the dead, and attend us, as our accusers, to the judgement-seat.—But there is an end to be served likewise by representing us as a sect; for then the imprudence of some (and where among the sons of men shall we find an exemption from imprudence?) are charged upon the party. As therefore we disclaim the notion of any sect but that of the Nazarenes, and detest the idea of any party but the church of England, I beg leave to protest against that method of proceeding, and to desire that every man may bear his own burden; since, if one who has read Hutchinson should think proper to talk nonsense at the Land's End or Berwick-upon-Tweed, I see no reason why it should be any thing to me, because I have read Hutchinson, when I do not talk nonsense at Oxford. Nor can it surely be agreeable to the rules of candour and benevolence, that, because a whimsical interpretation is given by one writer, therefore a sound interpretation should not be taken from another. By his own words let every man be justified, and by his own words let him be condemned.

The author says, p. 6, "our behaviour is become

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"matter of general complaint."—From whence comes the complaint? Not from our superiors in this place; for the gentleman who so worthily fills the chair at present, thought proper to put one of us into the university pulpit; who, though this author and his friends "came in full expectation of "the marvellous," p. 16, out-did every thing they could have dreamed of, by having the assurance to preach the doctrine of the homilies on the 30th of January. And what makes this beyond any thing we meet with in history is, that he did it, when he was probably only in deacon's orders!—But who, then, are these complainants? Why, some of the warmest friends of the university, p. 6, who, it seems, are out of countenance at such monstrous things as these, and are prevented from *standing forth effectually in its vindication.* Whether this writer thought it would be a disgrace to him to appear in our company, I do not know; otherwise, it had been but acting the part of an ingenuous adversary to have favoured the world with his name in his title page, together with those of his adversaries, especially, as at p. 40, he talks something about a protest that he has entered; and an anonymous protest is what one seldom hears of. Had he given us his name, we might have known who these effectual vindicators of the university are: as matters now stand, we may suppose them to be persons of many extraordinary endowments; but, from the fear they express of being out of countenance for the university, we must conclude, that what they are par-

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ticularly famous for is their modesty.—But after all, with regard to the complaint talked of—Sure I am, that if our superiors in the university, and in our respective colleges, have any thing to allege against our conduct, whereby we hurt the cause of Christianity, the church of England, the university, or the society to which each belongs, and will be pleased to signify it to us, they shall see that we can practise the doctrine we preach, of obedience to all that are in authority over us.

I shall next reply to some general charges which the author has brought against us.

I. The first is, that we set up for the only Christian preachers in the nation. "They tell men," says he, p. 6, "that they, and they *only*, are *the servants of the most High God, who show forth the way of salvation.*" The way of salvation is but one, viz. faith in Christ, bringing forth the fruits thereof; and none, but those who preach that, are the servants of the most High God, that show forth the way of salvation. That none do preach it but the readers of Mr. Hutchinson, I never said or thought; though I wish their number was much greater than it is. If the gentleman can produce any one that he thinks has said so, let him defend himself.

II. Ibid. "They labour to discredit all other "preachers of the Gospel," &c. By no means. They labour to discredit all erroneous tenets, preached by many who should preach the Gospel. It is the complaint of hundreds of serious and pious Christians, who have never read or heard of Mr. Hutch-

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inson, that there is at present not only a lamentable relaxation of discipline in the church, but (what is indeed the consequence of it) as lamentable a falling-off from the old way of preaching and expounding the word of God. Let any one read the sermons of the primitive fathers, and our divines that lived in the times succeeding the reformation, who preached from the fathers, as the fathers did from the Scriptures, and compare their discourses with those of this last century, and they must pronounce one or other of them to be many removes from Christianity. If offence should be taken at this, I can only say, that if any one will tell me how truth may be spoken, in such cases as these, without offending some, I will spare no labour to learn the art of it. —But it will be said, perhaps, these fathers and divines are now of no authority. Perhaps so.—Let it be my lot to tread in their steps on earth, and sit at their feet in heaven! I ask no more in this world, or that which is to come.—What I have to observe farther at present is, that, if there be really such a defection from the primitive manner of preaching, the properest place wherein to speak of it is a university, where preachers are educated.

III. "They dare to deny the very existence of "moral duties, in order to exalt Christian virtues," —p. 7. Moral duties are what the Scripture calls works. If these are done in Christ, they are Christian virtues; and then, here is a distinction without a difference: if they are done out of Christ, upon any other than Christian motives, they are nothing to any saving purpose: and, if they are done against

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Christ, as meritorious to salvation, they are much worse than nothing. But to state our sentiments more at large upon this important point of doctrine. We preach the fall of man into a state of sin and corruption, in which state we say, with the 10th article of our Church, that he "has no power to do "good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, with-"out the grace of God by Christ preventing him, "that he may have a good will, and working with "him, when he has that good will: and art. 13, "that as to works done before the grace of Christ, "for that they are not done as God has willed and "commanded them to be done, we doubt not but "they have the nature of sin." We preach justification by the blood of Christ, sanctification by his Spirit, and the fruits of that Spirit the evidences of both. How we can be said to deny the existence of moral duties, because we preach faith, the root from whence they spring, I know not; unless he that plants a vine does, by that action, deny the existence of grapes. One thing, indeed, we do affirm, because we can prove it from Scripture, that whoever preaches and enforces moral duties, without justification and sanctification preceding, may as well declaim upon the advantages of walking, to a man that can neither stir hand nor foot: such is the natural impotence of the soul to do any good thing, till it is justified and sanctified. Let the declamation be ever so elegant, St. Peter's plain address, I suppose, would be worth ten thousand of them to a cripple—"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise "up and walk." Such is the difference between an

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Ethical divine and a Christian preacher. It is, indeed, a rule with some, to suppose the people already sufficiently instructed in Christianity: but why is it not much more probable, that they should be already sufficiently instructed in morality than in Christianity, if all their ministers preach upon the former, and none upon the latter; which must be the case, if all act upon the same supposition, of their people being already adepts in the Gospel? The moral, or practical part of the apostolical sermons and epistles, is generally the last and shortest, and comes after the apostles have enlightened the understanding with the knowledge of Christ, and warmed the heart with some great doctrine of salvation; as they knew, that one stroke, when the iron was hot, did more execution than twenty when it was cold[a].

In short, since, as our Church expresses it in her 10th article—"The condition of man, after the fall "of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare "himself, by his own natural strength and good "works, to faith, and calling upon God;" and since, as she says in the 11th article—"We are ac-"counted righteous before God, only for the merit "of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, "and not for our own works, or deservings;" it is certain that whoever preaches works, or moral duties, disjoined from faith in Christ, with its motives and principles of action, preaches a doctrine

[a] See 1 Cor. xv. where, after 57 verses upon a doctrine, the apostle closes with one only, by way of practical inference.

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contrary to the whole tenour of the Bible, and as far from Christianity as the east is from the west. To what purpose then serve good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification? The 12th article will tell us—" They (even they) cannot " put away our sins, or endure the severity of God's " judgement: yet are they pleasing and acceptable " to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of " a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a " lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree " is discerned by its fruits." The fruit receives its goodness from the tree, not the tree from the fruit, which does not make the tree good, but shows it to be so, because men do not gather grapes of thorns: so works receive all their goodness from faith, not faith from works, which do not themselves justify, but show a prior justification of the soul that produces them; as it is written—" We know that we have " passed—μεταβεβηκαμεν—from death unto life, be- " cause we love the brethren:" 1 John, iii. 14. The question therefore will be, who is the best husbandman, he who diligently plants the vine and waters it, or he who spends his time in writing essays upon the nature and properties of grapes in general, and wild grapes in particular, till " the vineyard of the " man void of understanding is all grown over with " thorns," from which, as we observed above, men do not gather grapes? If the author had a vineyard to let, his choice of a tenant would soon be determined, though the latter of the two candidates wrote a style like an angel.

But he is pleased to say, p. 7, " Morality is not

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"within our system." Of the truth of this assertion let the whole university be witnesses, and he himself shall be judge. For he says, p. 40, "Were the "principles of us all as rational and salutary, as he "is convinced the lives of some of us are serious "and exemplary, he would most heartily join with "those who should say, We wish you good luck in "the name of the Lord; and, for his brethren and "companions' sakes, yea, because of the house of "the Lord our God, he would wish our cause, as "well as ourselves, prosperity." But he should not have marked out the word *some*—"the lives of some "of us are serious"—because that necessarily slurs the characters of some others, and leaves the world to imagine, we have some immoral persons among us; when he knows it would puzzle him to show we have one such, in the whole number of those whom he calls Hutchinsonians. And, if the fruits are good, they will plead, I hope, for a little more consideration, before the tree that bears them be cut down and cast into the fire: a sentence he seems to have passed upon us in his own mind, and calls aloud upon our reverend governors to be his executioners of it—and the sooner the better. Which lets me into another particular concerning him, viz. that he is a man of moderation.

IV. We are still in the same page. "Under "pretence," he says, "of glorifying revelation, we "insult and trample upon reason, which also is the "gift of God." That reason is the gift of God, no one denies. But, if he would talk like a master of his subject, he should show the use and extent of

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reason, and what are the subjects that properly fall under her cognizance. The abuse, not the use of reason, is what we argue against. Reason, we say, was made to learn, not to teach; and, therefore, to set her up for a teacher, when she was never designed for that office, is certainly wrong. What the eye is to the body, reason, or understanding, is to the soul, as says the apostle, Ephes. i. 18. "Having the eyes of your understanding"—*της διανοιας*—the faculty of discernment—"enlightened." The eye, then, is framed in such a manner as to be capable of seeing, reason in such a manner as to be capable of knowing. But the eye, though ever so good, cannot see without light; reason, though ever so perfect, cannot know without instruction. The eye, indeed, is that which sees, but the light is the cause of its seeing; reason is that which knows, but instruction is the cause of its knowing. And it would be as absurd to make the eye give itself light, because it sees by the light, as to make reason instruct itself, because it knows by instruction. The phrase, therefore, light of reason, seems to be an improper one, since reason is not the light, but an organ for the light of instruction to act upon; and a man may as well take a view of things upon earth, in a dark night, by the light of his own eye, as pretend to discover the things of heaven, in the night of nature, by the light of his own reason. Nor do we any more derogate from the perfection of reason, when we affirm it cannot know without instruction, than we derogate from the perfection of the eye, when we deny it has a power of seeing in the dark. Christ

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only, who is the Sun of righteousness, has in him the perfection of light, even all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The perfection of reason is to be able to receive of his fulness, "to receive the instruc-"tion of wisdom:" Prov. i. 3. Without instruction it is impossible for her to do any thing, because reasoning, or induction of inferences, necessarily presupposes her to be furnished with proper data to go upon. And these data, in spiritual things, are only to be had from the word of God; for—"The com-"mandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the "eyes"—Psal. xix. 8. "The entrance of thy words "giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" —cxix. 130. The things which are above cannot be manifested to us, but by the light which is above, where those things are, and cometh down from the Father of lights, by the word of his revelation; the divine original of which was demonstrated with power, by mighty signs and wonders, to the senses of hundreds and thousands; and that demonstration entered in an authentic record, preserved and guarded by an uninterrupted succession, first in the Jewish, and then in the Christian church: all this reason must be taught from without, or else live in ignorance, which is the curse of God upon all who have rejected his word, apostatized from his faith, or broke from his church; a sin which, indeed, always has been, and always will be, followed by the other two. Reason can no more find out, without the help of revelation, the original state and constitution of man, the changes that have happened in his nature, and the counsels of God that have taken

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place in consequence of those changes—points upon which every thing that can be said about religion turns,—reason, I say, can no more find out these, than she can prove metaphysically, that William the Conqueror vanquished Harold at Hastings in Sussex; and demonstrate *à priori*, without the assistance of history, all the revolutions, with their effects, that have happened in the English government from that day to this.

V. Similar to this is another objection often made; "that we decry natural religion." To be sure we do; because, at the best, it is a religion without the knowledge of God, or the hope of salvation; which is deism; and, such as it is, it owes its birth, not to nature, but a corrupted tradition; i. e. in one word, instead of natural religion, it is traditional infidelity. For as a revelation was made to man of the covenant of works before the fall, and the covenant of grace after it; and as we are certain that all mankind came from one common stock, it is a plain and evident matter of fact that, from Adam to this day, there never was, or could be, a man left to himself to make a religion of nature. It is, I know, a received notion, that man, by a due and proper use of his rational faculties, may do great things; and so, by a due and proper use of the organs of vision, man may arrive at a knowledge of the objects around him. But still the pinching question returns—Is it not light that enables him to make a due and proper use of the one, and instruction of the other? Show us the eye that sees without light, and the understanding that reasons upon religion without instruc-

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tion; and we will allow they both do it by the light of nature. Till then, let us hear no more of natural religion, but give the glory were it is due, by owning ingenuously and gratefully, as we ought to do, that, as all light comes from the sun, though we receive it often by communication from other bodies; so, that all instruction has come from the beginning, at sundry times and in divers manners, from the Sun of righteousness; and has been only reflected, more or less, pure or tinged, from one man to another. And let us entreat him, whose "countenance "is as *the sun shineth in his* strength, to anoint our "eyes with eye-salve, that we may see;" which, otherwise, we shall not do even when we have the light; because by sin not only the light was darkened, but the organ disordered. And the physician of souls is the Sun of righteousness.

Upon the subjects of these two last articles, let me recommend to the reader's careful and attentive perusal, two books. The first shall be, the inimitable Mr. Leslie's *Short and easy Method with the Deists*; where the debate between the Christians and them, upon the evidence of revelation, is brought to one single point, and their cause overthrown for ever.—This most excellent piece, with the other tracts of the same admirable author usually bound with it, have, I thank God, entirely removed every doubt from my mind; and, in my poor opinion, they render the metaphysical performances upon the subject entirely useless: since, if the Scriptures are once proved to be the word of God (as I think they are infallibly in that book), we have nothing farther

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to do but to lay them together, and explain them, according to the measure of knowledge given unto every one. The second book I would recommend is—Dr. Ellis's *Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature.* In this book, natural religion is fairly demolished; and her greatest admirers and advocates, after all the panegyrics made, and compliments passed upon her, are seen confessing, that she has borrowed every thing from the corrupted tradition of an original revelation; nay, they even despise her (which is rather too cruel) when she has decked herself out with these borrowed ornaments to the best advantage, they themselves assisting at her toilette. Indeed, by the accounts of Wilkins, Tillotson, Clarke, Wollaston, and all the rest of the writers in that way, the point in dispute between modern divines and the deists seems to have been, whether twilight was preferable to sunshine. And I know not how it happened, or what could be the reason, that they neglected to urge it home with full force upon the deists (as they might have done, since, at times, they all owned it), that the sun himself was the cause of the twilight; which had put an end to the dispute at once.

VI. We are charged with "a great contempt of "learning." That depends upon the nature and kind of the learning. Because sometimes a man is called a learned man, who, after a course of several years' hard study, can tell you, within a trifle, how many degrees of the non-entity of nothing must be annihilated before it comes to be something.—See

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King's Origin of Evil, ch. iii. p. 129, with the note. That such kind of learning as that book is filled with, and the present age is much given to admire, has done no service to the cause of truth, but, on the contrary, that it has done infinite disservice to it, and almost reduced us from the unity of the Christian faith to the wrangling of philosophic scepticism, is the opinion of many besides ourselves, and too surely founded on fatal experience. I shall set down the sentiments of one person only, whose reason for speaking slightly of metaphysics certainly was not a want of skill in them. I mean the good and great bishop Berkeley—"From the time," says this excellent prelate, "that divinity was considered "as a science, and human reason enthroned in the "sanctuary of God, the hearts of its professors "seem to have been less under the influence of "grace:" Miscel. p. 232. In another place he assigns a reason for this:—"The metaphysical know-"ledge of God, considered in his absolute nature, "or essence, is one thing; and to know him as "he stands related to us, as Creator, Redeemer, "and Sanctifier, is another;" p. 216. Here this acute and judicious writer has reached the *jugulum causæ*. For first, the knowledge of God as he stands related to us, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, is the only knowledge of him that can be of any service to us: because the knowledge of him considered in his absolute nature, or essence (supposing we could attain to it without the revelation of Jesus Christ), must only fill our souls full of tribulation and anguish, horror and despair, and make the

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world a dungeon of condemnation, where nothing is heard but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; since God out of Christ appears armed with all the terrors of omnipotence, a revenger to execute wrath, to the uttermost, upon every soul that doeth evil; that is, upon every soul of man, inasmuch as there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not. Our God is a consuming fire.—But secondly, all disquisitions into the absolute nature and essence of God, without the Scripture;—all endeavours to speculate upon his eternal power and Godhead, otherwise than as they are clearly seen by the eye of faith, being understood, or made intelligible, by analogy, through the medium of the things that are made;—all such learned inquiries have always ended in materialism, and fallen short of the knowledge of the eternal Jehovah, who made the heavens, which the nations, and all their philosophers, worshipped as the gods that govern the world. And it is a truth, that calls for the most serious consideration of all those who draw up systems of religion exclusively of Christianity, that neither Heathens, Jews (in their present state of unbelief), Mahometans, Deists, Arians, or Socinians, worship the true God. For all that is manifested of the true God in his word, is manifested of him as existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Son and the Holy Ghost they have not, for they deny them; and—it is written—"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:" 1 John, ii. 23. And if he has neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, he has not the true God; and if he has not

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the true God, he has no God, because there is but one God. And so he is, in the apostle's customary phrase, without God; in the Greek ΑΘΕΟΣ; in English, an Atheist. And since no metaphysical system of natural religion has the Trinity in it, of what use can this learning be that we object to, and which the Scriptures were written to make foolish and bring to nought?—May they be so preached as effectually to do it, till the light of Christian knowledge triumphs over the darkness of human ignorance, and Christ only is set forth "as the wisdom and power "of God, for salvation, to the ends of the earth; "that all the kindreds of the nations may remember "themselves, and be turned to him who is the Lord "their God, and all the world may worship him, "sing of him, and praise his name!" As to those who are engaged in the study of useful arts and sciences, languages, history, antiquity, physics, &c. &c. with a view to make them handmaids to divine knowledge, we honour their employment, we desire to emulate their industry, and most sincerely "wish "them good luck in the name of the Lord."

VII. We are said to be ignorant of the learning we pretend to despise. This charge is supported chiefly by some curious proofs that I am an invincible blockhead, who can neither write sense nor English; for I have written Revelations, instead of Revelation, no less than twice in the same sermon; and make Lisbon say sometimes *thou*, and sometimes *you*, because the pronouns were varied in the different texts of Scripture which I had occasion to quote and apply. See *Word to the H.* p. 21. 30.

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—But pray, sir, let me bear my own burden; heavy as it is, I submit to it all, and take shame to myself. Do not lay my ignorance at other people's doors, who certainly have nothing to do with it. We have books written by those whom you will call Hutchinsonians, that do not altogether show the driveller. There is the Reverend Dr. Hodges's *Elihu;* there is the Reverend Mr. Holloway's *Primævity of the Hebrew Tongue:* there is another book, too, which I am sure would incline you to have a little mercy upon us, if you were to read it; and that is—*An Answer to Mr. Kennicott,* by my friend Mr. Comings.

VIII. The last and heaviest charge against us is—want of charity. Now the word charity is the English translation of the Greek word αγαπη, love. Love is shown, by consulting the interest of the person beloved. And, as an eternal interest is preferable to a temporal, the interest of the soul must be consulted before that of the body, if they happen to clash; otherwise, a false love of the body may prove a real hatred of the soul. Therefore it is written—Levit. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in "thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy "neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."—or—"that thou bear not sin for him." Agreeably to this rule, the author has chosen a text for his motto, which ends with the words—"admonishing one "another." And his rule in admonishing he gives us, p. 20,—"In order effectually to expose igno-"rance, and guard against imposition from it, (of "which, to be sure, there is great danger!) it should

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"plainly be called ignorance: and the more effectu-
"ally to banish vice, and prevent its contagion,
"(there's a charitable touch for our morality again!)
"it should plainly be called vice." So say I; and in order to expose and guard against infidelity, it should plainly be called infidelity; and in order the more effectually to prevent the contagion of a damnable heresy, it should plainly be called a damnable heresy: otherwise, souls may be sent into torments, to curse to all eternity the cruelty of those who, through fear of man, forgot the Lord Jesus their Maker, and did not speak out, and warn them plainly of the wrath to come upon all who deny the Lord that bought them. It is a dreadful thing for a man to dissemble, when he knows from the physician that the plague is in a house, and sees his friends going into it. We know from the great Physician, that heresy is the plague of the soul; and, without repentance, is as inevitably the death of it as the pestilence is of the body. For heresy is damnable, and the heresy that has that epithet in Scripture, is that of denying the Lord, i. e. denying the Divinity of him who is the Lord Jehovah, King of kings, and Lord of lords. In all such cases, the greater the danger is, the stronger ought the terms to be that express it, to keep men from running into it. The language, it is true, must often sound harsh to the parties concerned; for physic is seldom palatable. But, whether they hear or whether they forbear, they must be openly reproved, and the truth must be boldly and undauntedly opposed to their pernicious errors, that others may not fall after the

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same example of unbelief. Fear of disobliging here is the greatest of cruelties. It is like suffering a man to drown, for fear you should hurt him in drawing him out of the water. Therefore,—"Cry aloud" says God to his prophet, "and spare not. Lift "up thy voice like a trumpet, tell my people "their transgressions." Otherwise—"If the watch-"man see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, "and the people be not warned, if the sword come, "and take any person from among them, he is taken "away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require "at the watchman's hands:" Ezek. xxxiii. 6. One thing, indeed, must be said; that those, who undertake to do this office to a sinful people (which every minister does undertake when he is ordained), must first determine to expect neither praise nor reward in this world. And, alas! many think "this is a hard "saying;" "who," say they, "can hear it?" May God increase the number of those, who have ears to hear, and a heart to obey their Master! For though —"Take up your cross and follow me," be a hard saying;—"Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," is a much harder.

These, I think, are all the general objections I meet with. For, as to those of our preaching Christ as the substance of all the legal shadows, and explaining the spiritual sense of the natural images in Scripture, with the Warburtonian cant, so much in vogue, of cabalistic theologues, typists, allegorists, &c. those who read the Bible want no answer, and none will satisfy those who do not. Only it may be observed, that a mistake in interpreting a particular

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does not overthrow the spiritual interpretation in general, any more than a mistake in explaining a doctrine overthrows the creed. All that follows from it is, that the man who makes it is wrong, and should be set right. If those who are able will do this kind office for us, they shall have our thanks. As to the expositions that are peculiar to Mr. Hutchinson, I know not who makes them articles of faith, or terms of communion: I am sure we do not. But it is unreasonable to desire us to quit them, till they are proved to be false. If the gentleman I am at present concerned with (whoever he be), or any body else, can do this, in God's name let the expositions fall, if they cannot stand. Only I must beg of the gentlemen, if they have any thoughts of succeeding in their attempt, to confute before they clamour; because one page of proof is worth twenty of railing: which proves nothing but a want of proof.

I come now to particulars. And here I am almost ashamed to ask the favour of the reader's company, the entertainment is likely to be so very indifferent. But for the sake of many who may be misled and imposed upon by his author's misrepresentations, an answer must be given. For he seems to have regulated his conduct by an old maxim, that where much dirt is thrown, some will stick. Therefore, kind reader, if you have nothing else to do, you and I will try and divert ourselves as well as we can.

The subject of the first complaint is an affair of a very malignant nature. Somebody or other, it seems, has extracted Christianity out of "Samson's "riddle," p. 8. Now I own, for my part, as times

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go, I rejoice to hear of Christianity, let it be extracted from whence it will. The history of Samson is a part of those Scriptures which were written for our instruction in the righteousness which is by faith. He was an illustrious figure of the Almighty Saviour of the Israel of God; and never more so than when, through faith in him and his victory over the devil, he "stopped the mouth of the lion," and slew him without any weapon in his hand. Of this act of heroic faith, which was the subject of his riddle, thus speaks St. Jerome (who, by the way, has stolen several of Hutchinson's thoughts, though this is not one of them)—"Venit enim verus Samson "ad Allophylos, et dum pergit Thamnas, ut pauper-"culam de gentibus duceret Dalilam, interfecit leo-"nem, et illo mortuo comedit mella dulcedinis."—Comm. in Nahum, cap. ii. ad fin. And, to come nearer home, thus speaks the homily on the resurrection—"This mighty conquest of Christ's resur-"rection was signified before, by divers figures of "the Old Testament; as by Samson, when he slew "the lion, out of whose mouth came sweetness and "honey."—It were to be wished that these very learned censurers of our ignorance could be brought to read a little before they write.

But, to show that we are determined never to be easy, as long as there is any religion left, we have a dreadful story in the same page, enough to make one's blood run cold, of somebody else, that had frightened almost his whole parish, men, women, and children, into fits (only indeed they had been pretty much used to be frightened of late) by "abusing

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"the Society for propagating the Gospel."—People that find fault with others for printing what is true, should be particularly careful that they print nothing that is false; as this story is, from beginning to end; the gentleman here meant having reflected, not upon the Society, but, upon certain infidels, who, he said, had counteracted the godlike design of the Society, and sent over cargoes of their blasphemy to poison the continent: so that if any of the parish were surprised, it was a surprise altogether of their own manufacture, and a good deal of the same cast with that of an old woman, in King James the Second's time, who, after the minister of the parish had spent several discourses in confuting the errors of the Romanists, said, "She was sure their parson "must be a *papidge;* for he was always talking "about the Pope."—That what my friend said upon the occasion with regard to the spreading infidel books in our plantations is true, I am assured by some gentlemen lately come from thence; two of whom our university hath created masters of arts by diploma; the Rev. Mr. Johnson, son of the excellent Dr. Johnson, president of the episcopal college in New York; and the Rev. Mr. Fayerweather, a happy convert from the schismatics to the church of England. And indeed, as I have had the pleasure of much conversation with them, I must take this opportunity of saying, they will reflect honour on the university, as they do on the country from whence they came. Their knowledge and piety, their zeal and sincerity, their love of Christ, and contempt of the world, together with their unfeigned

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desire to serve the church, and their unwearied diligence in doing it, give us ideas of our episcopal brethren in America to which we were before strangers. May the great God our Saviour prosper the glorious work of their hands upon them, till the clouds of infidelity disperse before the Sun of righteousness, rising to the American, perhaps, as he sets to the European world; and till the unhappy, misguided wanderers, having their eyes opened by the shining of his marvellous light, return to the church, and all become one fold under one shepherd, even the Bishop of their souls, ruling in every church that is his by an earthly representative! And, O come that happy day, when God shall put it into the hearts of our governors to remember "the "groanings of such as are in captivity" under the bondage of sin, and to consider the cries and tears of the hundreds and thousands, who would receive a bishop of the church of England, "as an angel "of God, even as Christ Jesus;" that he might "ordain them elders in every city," who, being sent forth, might "preach liberty to the miserable cap-"tives," and "the opening of the prison doors" to them that are "fast bound in darkness and the "shadow of death;" calling them forth into "the "light of the Lord God and the Lamb," to behold him shining in his church, in "the beauty of holi-"ness!" For whom this glorious work, of establishing Episcopacy in America, is reserved, God only knows. Blessed is he whose heart shall conceive, and whose hands shall accomplish it: his works done in the faith, and for the love of his Master

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"shall praise him," when that Master sits in judgement, in the gates of the new "Jerusalem," and "all generations," "arising" from the dust, "shall "call him blessed!"

Of the Rev. Dr. Patten this author says, p. 9, that "he is perhaps endowed with "a greater share "of learning, than both the other gentlemen," meaning Mr. Wetherell and myself. I have an objection to the word "perhaps" in this sentence; and beg leave to say, he certainly is endowed with a much greater share of learning, and we wish we may attain to half the piety that sanctifies his learning. And yet, says this writer,—"he seems to hold "learning in more sovereign contempt than either "of them." No true learning is the object of the doctor's contempt: metaphysical learning, which is science falsely so called, he treats as it deserves. And he had the best right to say what he has said of it, because—*intus et in cute novit*—and he has proved it all to be stark naught. And, for the sake of multitudes, whose eyes the Christian Apology has opened, the reader will rejoice to hear, that the author of it intends to proceed in establishing Revelation on its proper basis of the works which bear witness to the mission of the worker.

We proceed next to consider what is said of Mr. Wetherell. His crime is preaching passive obedience on the 30th of January. What would the author have had him preach? The principles of resistance, that brought the blessed martyr to the block? a doctrine which might justly have brought upon him the animadversion of his superiors; for certainly

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his majesty can have no security from men of such principles. The church of England disclaims them, and in her homilies has answered all the pleas for rebellion that ever were or can be brought; and determined this point, fully and fairly, from Scripture. And to them I refer the reader, as the only system of politics a Christian need to study, in order to "live a quiet and peaceable life, in humble obe-"dience to the king and all that are in authority "under him." If this writer will tell me the mischief done by passive obedience, I will tell him the mischief done by resistance; and will enter the comparison with him as soon as he pleases. To his present majesty King George the Second[b], we have sworn allegiance; and him we will obey, by acting in things lawful, and suffering in those that are otherwise, should any such be enjoined. Let this author say more. I wish I could hear him say as much. I shall take my leave of this subject, with observing only, in favour of obedience, that Lucifer had not lost heaven, if he had practised this doctrine; nor Christ gained it, if he had not.

I am now obliged to trouble the reader with my own concerns, the author having thought proper to make his remarks upon a sermon of mine, published on occasion of the late earthquakes. Of his verbal criticisms I have given two specimens above, and shall say no more of them, but—Peace be to their *manes!* For, surely, when he wrote them, he must have had as little to do as he had to say. Some other things I shall take notice of.

[b] The Apology was first printed in the year 1756.

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P. 8. He seems to be offended with me for preaching the sermon so often. I have nothing to accuse myself of on that head, unless it be that it was not preached much oftener; as it is to be feared, we have had our warnings. May they answer the end they were sent for!

P. 21. He says, I "intimate the text to be a "prophecy in one verse of the earthquake at Lisbon, "and in the very next verse of the earthquakes in "London." I declare the contrary at the beginning of the sermon: and drawing a parallel between two events, so far forth as they are parallel, is not making one a prophecy of the other.

Ibid. He informs the reader, I am "one of those "who arrogate to themselves greater knowledge, as "well as purer religion." Pardon me, sir! We arrogate them not to ourselves, but claim them for our Master, and his too much neglected word, where are contained all the treasures of knowledge and religion. "Through his commandments," it is certain, he can and will make those that study them "wiser than their enemies." Men may have more understanding than their teachers, if his testimonies are their meditation; and understand more than the ancients, if they keep his precepts. Let every one that has attained to this wisdom, give the glory to God, and pray for us that we may be led to it. This will be a much more Christian employment, than that of endeavouring to hinder and slander the little good we endeavour to do.

Ibid. "And are fond of charging other ministers "of the Gospel with irreligion and ignorance." Let

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us hope not, because this is the characteristic of Satan; and the author should not have said it, till he had proved it impossible for one person to convince another of sin, without taking a pleasure in finding him guilty. The meek and pious bishop Kenn himself, in his time, charged many ministers of the Gospel, very home, both with irreligion and ignorance. It was the grief of his heart that he was obliged to do it. And had this writer the discernment of spirits, which alone can qualify him to pass sentence in this case, there would be no occasion for us to tell him, that it is very far from being the joy of ours. But to reprove the sin, without making the sinner your enemy—*hic labor!*—"I pray you, brethren, "deal not so wickedly," says Lot, in the mildest manner possible. And what return was made him? —"He will needs be a judge."

P. 22. "I remembered thine everlasting judge-"ments, O Lord, and received comfort." In this text, he says, by judgements are meant God's laws. But, first, this does not appear. The person speaking complains in the verse before—"The proud have "had me exceedingly in derision, yet have I not "declined from thy law." Then follows—"I re-"membered משפטיך מעולם thy judgements from of old, "and received comfort." So then, the comfort he received, when the proud had him in derision, was from remembering God's judgement from of old, i. e. his judgements from the beginning decreed and executed against the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his church. For these are the fruitful sources of consolation to Christians in distress, sympathis-

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ing with their afflicted Master in the day of his humiliation. In what God has done, they see, by the eye of faith, what he will do; and therefore, in the darkest night of sorrow, chant forth these notes of triumph over their spiritual enemies—"As for Pharaoh and his host, he overthrew them in the Red Sea: He smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." Affection must grieve for the sinner, and sense be astonished at his fall; but faith views the Redeemer glorified in judgement; hope despairs not of mercy, in the midst of judgement, to all who are objects of it; and love endeavours to make the fall of some the salvation of others, till its work be perfected; when all carnal affection and fear shall be cast out for ever, and the love of Christ and his church be all in all. Secondly, if by judgements are meant God's laws, it comes to the same: for his laws contain his judgements on sin and sinners, and so they take that name from their contents.

P. 23. "Figurative cloud pierced by real prayers." No: the thing is real, though expressed figuratively.

Ibid. "Impropriety of calling this cloud an event." Not the cloud, but the breaking of the cloud, is the event spoken of.

But now, what will be the reader's surprise to hear I prayed publicly in St. Mary's pulpit, for a happy restoration of the family of James? which it is plain I did; for "I beseeched the Lord to be gracious unto his land, and to turn away captivity from Jacob;" *ergo*, I am a Jacob-ite. For shame, my good sir, for shame! If you mean this in ear-

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nest, it is a piece of gross calumny; if in jest, it is as full of profaneness, as it is empty of wit. Such arguments as these will hardly persuade all Christians and scholars to unite as one man against us, p. 40, though they may persuade us to unite as one man in saying—Long live the author of the Word to the Hutchinsonians!!

P. 24. I am taken to task for rashly correcting the Liturgy, by inserting the word *shortly*: "We be-"lieve that thou shalt *shortly* come to be our judge." As the word *shortly* does not please, we will change it for another, the word *quickly*; and lest the author should except against that, I will quote my authority —Rev. xxii. 12. "Behold I come quickly." And if it was to be quickly, when that was spoken, there can be no harm in saying, it will be shortly, now. But "how is it that we do not discern the signs of "the times," that we may be ready to give the proper answer to him that asketh us—"Watchman, "what of the night?"—"The night is far spent, the "day is at hand." Why should we be desirous of removing far from us that day, when our eyes shall behold the King in his beauty?—a day, glorious certainly to vigilant and zealous believers, though terrible to infidels and lukewarm disciples, who act with a view to the world, and not to that day when the world shall be destroyed. But, alas! the love of many is waxed cold, because the faith of many is waxed weak, through lack of Scripture knowledge to support it. "As to this Moses, that brought them "up out of the land of Egypt," they are ready to say, "they know not what is become of him;" and their hearts have lost all taste and relish for the

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apostle's exhortation to patience and perseverance—"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will "come, and will not tarry."

Ibid. "The assertion of God's having spoken to "all the dwellers upon earth seems too extensive, "by being universal." God spoke to all, though the judgement fell only upon one place.

Ibid. There is a jumble of author and cause, and cause and author, and first and second, and second and first; which I have read over several times, but confess it to be far above my comprehension. To talk with the gentleman a little in his own way—I take it for granted, the Word to the Hutchinsonians must have some author, and there must be some cause why it was written; but who is the author, or what was the cause, we are left to guess as well as we can.

Ibid. "It is a pity," he says, "I should have "inserted the irony upon reason, at p. 16, after I "have so properly connected the epithets rational "and defensible, in p. 5." But does it follow, that because the truth of God, when rightly explained and understood, will always be rational, and fit, and proper, that therefore reason is to pronounce the truth of God, which, through her natural blindness, she does not understand, to be irrational, unfit, and improper? There is a judgement of authority, which makes a thing to be what it judges it to be: this belongs only to God. And there is a judgement of discretion, which is opinion: this is the judgement of reason; and may be wrong, as well as right: nay, it will certainly be always wrong, in di-

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vine matters, when not formed upon revealed principles; because revelation only can make known to us the plan upon which God acts. Without this, it is impossible to judge of the fitness of the action. Now—"Who hath known the mind of the Lord? "But we," says the apostle, i. e. believers—"have the "mind of Christ," 1 Cor. ii. 16. because it is revealed by the Spirit, in the word. This is the source of true instruction to a Christian; and, as he receives it with humility, or rejects it with pride, he becomes wise or foolish. The judgement of reason has no sort of influence upon the truth of God, which is always just, fit, and rational in itself, whatever my reason, or your reason, or the reason of the whole world thinks of it; as it is written—"What if some "did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the "faith of God without effect? God forbid! yea, let "God be true, but every man a liar." Romans, iii. 3.

P. 25. Mr. Hutchinson is answered in the old way, by making nonsense, and then fastening it upon him. And this writer, to avoid detection, has referred, at large, to a book of 554 pages, without naming any page. He is desired to show, where Mr. Hutchinson talks about grains of light, and their becoming so large as to be invisible. He talks indeed of the convertibility of light and air, which, he says, are the same substance, in different conditions. And, as a very learned and able defender of Sir Isaac Newton told me once, when I had the pleasure of some conversation with him upon the subject, if this point of the consubstantiality of light and air be proved, the truth of Mr. Hutchinson's

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philosophy can hardly be disputed. There is much said, and many experiments brought by Mr. Hutchinson, and since by Mr. Bate, to prove this important point. The reader may consult likewise a well written piece, published lately at Edinburgh, called An Inquiry after Philosophy and Theology, &c. And what is very remarkable, not one of any note amongst all Mr. Hutchinson's opponents, has inquired into the merit of the physical part of his works, though the age is so fond of philosophical discoveries: and yet in the number and acuteness of his observations and experiments, he certainly was inferior to very few; as any one may see who will but look into his eleventh and twelfth volumes. The objections and prejudices with regard to the immortal Newton are no more; for he proves to be a Hutchinsonian all over; and his vacuum is delivered of as fine a plenum as one would wish to see. I hope his followers will not throw it upon the parish, because it was born after the death of its immortal father.

Ibid. "The last chapter in the Revelation declares "God shall destroy the world. No such declaration "in that chapter." There is a declaration of Christ's coming quickly; and his coming implies the destruction of the world, because to destroy the world is what he comes for.

Ibid. "The destruction of the world by water is "called an earthquake."—It is so; because, when the world was destroyed by water, the earth was dissolved; as may be demonstrated to sense at this day, by some sea-shells found in the midst of solid blocks of marble; and others filled with stone, though they

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have not an orifice in them bigger than a pin's point; the marble and stone therefore must once have been in a fluid state. If this author thinks the "fountains "of the great deep could be broken up, and the "earth clean dissolved, without an earthquake," he is at liberty doubtless to enjoy his own opinion. As to the description in Isaiah, it is evidently couched in terms taken from the history of the flood, though the destruction there spoken of may in some things go beyond it, and the earth may not recover again out of it, as it did out of the flood.

P. 26. He says, the repetition of the pronoun in Gen. vi. 17, is nothing to infidels, because they deny the authority of the Bible. But were not "these things written that they might believe?" and will not the word spoken condemn them at the last day, because they presumptuously and audaciously "make God a liar, by denying the record that God "has given?" At this rate, a man need only blaspheme the Bible stoutly, and it can never be brought against him, because he denies its authority. If any one were to argue in this manner with regard to the law of the land, would the judge set the law aside, and submit to try the criminal by certain reasons and fitnesses, that the criminal himself had framed, independent of the law? No, certainly; he would prove the authority of the law, and proceed to try him upon it. Now, either there is evidence to prove the authority of the Bible, or there is not. If there is, the dispute with infidels is at an end; and the truths of Scripture should be pressed home, with the consequence of rejecting them. If there is not,

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the labour of the preachers and the faith of the hearers are both vain: "Let us eat and drink, for "to-morrow we die."

Ibid. "How does Amos foretel this earthquake? "The words cited to express this prophecy are— "The Lord will roar," &c. But do not the words immediately preceding plainly point to the event foretold—"The words of Amos—which he saw two "years before the earthquake. And he said—the "Lord will roar," &c.

P. 27. "Is it possible for a man in his senses to "pronounce that Christians will not own Christ?" Yea, verily, and to prove it too. Christ was a preacher and practiser of passive obedience. And I know one that would take it amiss if I were to say he is no Christian, who affirms it as a doctrine justly exploded, though he himself has subscribed to its being a godly and wholesome doctrine. And so in many other instances, there are numbers of nominal Christians, who are ashamed to own their crucified Master in his doctrines and institutions, before a world grown so wise as to explode them. But,

Ibid. "By owning Christ, he means owning the "divinity of Christ, owning him equal to God the "Father." I do mean so indeed. For to say any thing less of his person is not owning but blaspheming him, and robbing him of the honour due to his name; which is—"Jehovah[c]—The Lord of Hosts "himself[d]—Most high,[e] and mighty God[f]—The

[c] Jer. xxiii. 6. [d] Isa. viii. 13.
[e] Psalm lxxxiii. 17, 18. Conf. 1 Cor. x. 9. [f] Isa. ix. 6.

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"only wise God[g]—God over all[h]—The Lord God of "the holy prophets[i]—The Lord Almighty, which is, "which was, and is to come[k]." Such as he is here set forth, I hope and trust, through the power of his grace, I should rejoice to own him before the world, in the face of death itself, to the joy of angels, and confusion of devils, and their accursed doctrine, propagated on earth through Arius and his followers; which has destroyed the Eastern, and now threatens the Western church.

Ibid. "Was the earthquake calculated to prove "this?" I think it was, as that, and the other signs attending the crucifixion, showed all nature to be in pangs, and sympathising with the sufferings of her Lord. And something like this said the Heathen philosopher, upon the occasion—Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur.

Ibid. "It made the centurion own the divinity "of Christ; but in what sense?" I am much concerned to meet with this question in the performance of one whom I suppose to be a Christian; because I never before heard any but Arians talk of a divinity in different senses, which (as they very well know) is no divinity at all. The Scripture says, there is but one Jehovah, Deut. vi. 4.: "Jehovah "our God is one Jehovah." And the same Scripture says, Christ is Jehovah—Jer. xxiii. 6.: "This

[g] Jude, ult. [h] Rom. ix. 5. [i] Rev. xxii. 6—16.

[k] Rev. i. 8. 11. The reader will be so good as to turn to these awful and concerning texts; and may He whom they treat of, give him understanding to the acknowledging of the saving truth contained in them!

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"is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah "our righteousness." This single argument will for ever baffle and defeat the sophistry of the whole Arian party, being every way absolutely impregnable by human or diabolical strength or cunning.

"P. 29. "Was the law given before Sinai thus "trembled? Was the law transgressed before it was "given? If not, how was this earthquake occasion-"ed by sin?" This is close and home: and, if it had not been for St. Paul, I had been in a scrape. But I believe he will help me out. For he says—Rom. iv. 15. "Where there is no law, there is no "transgression." And yet, there is no doubt but men transgressed before the giving the Mosaic law at Sinai; for, Rom. v. 13. "until the law, sin was "in the world;"—and just before—"death passed "upon all men, for that all have sinned." So the author must solve this, as his skill in divinity will give him leave. Not that it does indeed overthrow my position, any way; for sin was the cause of the terrible manifestation at mount Sinai, even though it was only designed to show the wrath that would follow the future transgression of the law then given. But, says our author,

Ibid. "The giving of the law was never consi-"dered as an act of vindictive judgement." An act of vindictive judgement it was not, because a mediator was suffered to interpose; and they heard the law by the ministration of a man. But the giving of the law, which had in it every thing that is terrible to man, was a most lively portraiture of that vindictive judgement, which will be executed, when the

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same God that gave it shall come, in the full power of his majesty, to require an account of it. The comparison is made by St. Paul, Heb. xii. 25, &c. and the reader may see the parallel between the circumstances that accompanied the giving the law, and those that will attend upon the last judgement, finely drawn, in that magazine of learning and sound divinity, bishop Andrews's book on the commandments; which, with his incomparable Sermons, I do humbly recommend to the careful perusal and deep meditation of all those, who read to be made wise unto salvation, instead of cavilling at forms of expression. I cannot expect the author of the Word to the Hutchinsonians will take any thing upon my recommendation: but if he has not already got bishop Andrews's Works, I am sure he will not delay making the purchase an hour, when he hears that the blessed martyr king Charles the First, recommended his sermons, a little before his death, to the constant study of his children.

Ibid. "Can it be said with propriety, that the "earthquake at Christ's death was a judgement or "punishment for sin?" With the greatest propriety; for then it was, that judgement and punishment were executed on us all, in the person of our surety Christ, who "was made sin, and a curse for us, "and bore our sins which God laid on him, in his "own body, on the tree." He bore the sin of his murderers, which otherwise must have brought immediate destruction on the world, seeing they crucified the Lord of glory. Nor is it any absurdity, as this writer thinks, to say, the earthquake at the re-

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surrection was a judgement or punishment for sin. He, who died to atone for the guilt, arose to destroy the power of sin, and manifested his victory over it by inflicting this judgement and punishment on his enemies, who did shake and became as dead men. At his death, sin was punished in him; at his resurrection, it was punished by him.

P. 30. I speak of the shrieks and cries of the unhappy sufferers, entombed in the ruins of their city. Here my censor seemeth to himself to have discovered a grievous blunder, for "*entombed*," he says, "implies death and silence." But suppose, learned sir, the people were buried alive, which was the case here.—O this same Ars critica!

Ibid. He has found out contradiction upon contradiction. First, I say, "We can assign no reason "for God's not dealing with us as he did with the "people at Lisbon, seeing we are far perhaps from "being more righteous." Then I assign a reason myself, because London standeth by faith, and then destroy that reason again, by saying, the faith is ridiculed. This, reader, is the contradiction, as it appears to him through his critical spectacles. But I shall show they are of the magnifying sort. For, in the first place, taking it as he quotes it, there is no contradiction. It is asserted, that London stands by faith, as every Christian state and city does: and, if that faith be ridiculed, and blasphemed, there is great reason to apprehend a fall. This is the whole of the contradiction, as stated in his way. But, secondly, to state it in mine, I must observe, he has misquoted the first sentence, upon which the sup-

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posed contradiction is built. For I am there addressing myself not to London, or to the church, or nation collectively, but to the cases and consciences of individuals (which he quarrels with me for not doing, p. 39), and it stands in the sermon in the singular number, *he*, whereas it is quoted in the plural, *we*, and then applied to London. The objection therefore vanishes at once, and leaves the reader to employ his meditations upon the author of it.

But now I must gird my armour close, and look to my guard; for the gentleman is determined to give me no quarter.

P. 31. I say, Has not a complaint against Arianism been followed by the preferment of the offender?—"An insinuation," he affirms, "that this "preferment was the reward of Arianism." The words insinuate nothing; but only declare a fact, that an offender in the Arian way was preferred; upon which people must form their own judgements. No names are mentioned, nor persons characterized. I thought it my duty to speak of this, before an audience consisting chiefly of such as were, or were to be, in the office of the ministry; and no reasonable Christian, I believe, will say I have been guilty of any breach of my duty in my manner of doing it, which was as respectful and inoffensive as the nature of the case would admit of. To avoid giving any offence, I well knew was impossible; and therefore endeavoured so to discharge my duty to God, as not to transgress that to man; and so to perform that to man, as not to shrink from giving testimony to the truth of God and his church.

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P. 32. "How frequently are complaints *ill* "grounded!" How frequently are they *well* grounded!—is all the answer that deserves.

Ibid. "The divinity of Christ, without which, "*he says*, our redemption is absolutely void, and we "are yet in our sins." And do not *you* say so too, sir?

P. 32, 33. The author's style shows him to be in some perplexity;—"Mr. Horne will perhaps betake "himself to the circumstance of not reading the "Athanasian Creed.—The omission may have been "occasioned by the objections of other people. Pro-"bably, by many, he means a considerable part of "his own congregation." So the people teach the priest, I find, instead of the priest teaching the people.—"Possibly he may think the damnatory clauses, "though lawful, yet not expedient.—And even sup-"posing that he does not approve of these damna-"tory clauses, is he, or is any man, therefore, and "for that single reason, to be called an Arian?" That single reason contains a great many more in it. For no man can object to the damnatory clauses, if he believes the doctrine of the creed to be true. Now the doctrine of the creed is, that there are in one essence or substance, three persons of equal power, majesty, and eternity, subsisting in the relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that is, in other words, what the Scripture expressly declares, that there is but one Jehovah, or self-existing essence; yet the Father is Jehovah, the Son Jehovah, and the Holy Ghost Jehovah. Into this faith the whole

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world was baptized, according to the commission given to the apostles—Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye, and "teach," or make disciples, or Christians, of "all na-"tions." How?—"Baptizing them εἰς τὸ ONOMA, "into the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of "the Holy Ghost." And these three are one:" for, Eph. iv. 5. "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Faith in the Trinity in Unity therefore is the catholic faith, which all nations were baptized into; and which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved: for St. Mark adds to his account of the commission—"Whosoever believeth not shall be damned."

Ibid. "This *young* divine." That is a fault which will mend every day.

Ibid. There is an argument advanced against me upon my own principles, which is, that because I say the centurion owned the divinity of Christ when he called him the Son of God, therefore every one, that calls him the Son of God, owns it now. Which by no means follows. For the phrase, Son of God, among the Jews, from whom the centurion had it, implied an equality with God; as appears from John, v. 18. where they accused Christ of saying, "God "was his Father, making himself equal with God." But it is well known, that now both Arians and Socinians will subscribe to Christ's being the Son of God; and yet the one mean that he is an exalted creature, the other that he is a mere man only; neither of them believing, that the Son of God is likewise Immanuel, God with us.

As this writer has thought proper to introduce

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Dr. Carter, I shall offer two or three short remarks upon that gentleman's Sermon, and the Preface to it.

The first shall be with regard to the Arian pamphlet called—A Letter to the Mayor and Corporation of Deal, &c. Dr. Carter does, indeed, disclaim being the author of it, but "takes the opportunity of "sincerely thanking the author for the kind opinion "he appears to have of him;" and says, "the ar-"gumentative parts of his letter will speak for them-"selves:" Pref. p. 1, 2. Upon which I shall only observe, that these are very extraordinary terms for a Christian priest to use, when speaking of an heretical and blasphemous performance.

But, secondly, in the 14th page of the sermon, there are texts brought to show, that absolute supremacy is ascribed to God only; that is, exclusively of Christ. But why is no notice taken of the numberless texts that ascribe absolute supremacy to Christ; and thereby show him to be a person in that God, who is God only? E. g. One of the expressions he quotes, as proving absolute supremacy to belong to God only, is from 1 Tim. vi. 15. "King "of kings, and Lord of lords." But the margin of our English Bible refers us to Rev. xvii. 14. and xix. 16. where Christ, the Lamb that was slain, the Word of God, has this title, King of kings, and Lord of lords. And therefore, the expression being the same, if it proves absolute supremacy to belong to God, it proves it to belong to Christ, who therefore is the supreme God; or else there are two supremes, the one subordinate to the other. The

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same might be said of the other titles of God, which in one part or other of the Scriptures are all given to Christ. And when they are collected, and set in opposition to those passages which imply a subordination, the result of the whole will always be, that he is equal to the Father as touching his godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.

Thirdly, in p. 16, the Doctor shows plainly, he has no great affection for our Articles, by dwelling so much upon the old Arian evasion, of subscribing to the use of the book of Common Prayer, not to the truth of the doctrines in it. Whereas our articles are articles of doctrine; and the prayers are built upon those doctrines, and recognize them; so that no honest man can use the prayers, if he does not believe the doctrines, both being conceived in the same terms.

Fourthly, in the same page, he says that, supposing the declaration does express an assent and consent to the doctrines, "yet still those doctrines "must have been taken by the minister, in no other "sense than what he, according to the best of his "judgement, admits to be conformable to the holy "Scriptures." But he plights his faith to God and his church, at the time of subscribing, that according to the best of his judgement (which it is supposed he has taken care to inform properly) he does admit them to be conformable to the Scriptures, as they stand expressed by the church, in the sense that she intended them, not in a reserved sense of his own. As, e. g. every man that subscribes to the eighth article, declares, that the three creeds may

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be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture. And these gentlemen all know, the church of England services can never be reconciled with their heretical misconceptions of Scripture, by all the reserves and evasions in the world. The great Dr. Clarke carried matters a little too far, and would needs be trying the experiment; which blew him up, and put his friends out of countenance for him. They are grown wiser now; and, as the Liturgy will not speak for them, they will take care it shall not speak against them. It is much out of order, they tell us; a review is the only medicine, and they the only persons that can administer it. Kind and benevolent sirs, we thank you; but we know you rather too well; at least, it is not your faults if we do not. We have not forgotten some predecessors of yours, in the last century, certain quack-doctors, who came over with a nostrum, spick and span new, from Geneva; they persuaded the poor credulous Church that she was much troubled with the tooth-ache, and cut her head off to cure it. Only let her alone, gentlemen: there is nothing can hinder her doing well, but—too much of your attendance.

Lastly, as errors, like misfortunes, seldom come single, I find, in this sermon of Dr. Carter's, a dash of something else besides Arianism. For, p. 7, there is this strange assertion, that "virtue has in-"trinsic excellencies, of which faith is destitute, "which give it, i. e. virtue, a vast pre-eminence." Faith has one intrinsic excellency, of which works are destitute; and that is, that it will justify a sinner, and carry him to heaven, as it did the thief upon the

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cross: this, I think, gives it a vast pre-eminence over works, which cannot justify, otherwise than, as fruits, they evidence the faith that does; for—we are justified by faith only, says the 11th article, upon the authority of Scripture. And it is the doctrine of the 13th article, that works derive all their excellency from faith, without which they have the nature of sin. Yet, according to Dr. Carter, virtue has intrinsic excellencies which faith cannot give it, for it has them not. The reader will observe, how natural it is for faith to sink in its value, when Christ, who is the object of it, is degraded. The reason Dr. Carter assigns for the pre-eminence of virtue over faith is a very extraordinary one. "It is fixed," says he, "upon a more indisputable foundation." I am sorry to hear that; because faith is fixed upon Christ: and "other foundation," I am told, "can no "man lay." The consequence of this sad fall of the doctor's into these abominable errors, as it shows itself at the conclusion of the sermon, is very melancholy. He thinks proper to conclude with the 15th psalm; which, as it is there introduced, seems to countenance his notion of the pre-eminence of virtue, and to point it out as a way by which man may be justified and heaven obtained, no mention at all being made of faith. But let us see into what a condition it puts us all; and whether it will not prove the absolute necessity of faith in Christ, very God as well as very man, to obtain salvation. The psalm begins within a question—"Who shall abide in thy "tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" Then follows a description of a perfect character,

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performing all righteousness. And then it concludes —"Whoso doeth these things shall never be moved." It is very true. These "do," says the law, "and "thou shalt live." But the next question is, who is there that has done them all, and never offended in one point? Not one mere man, from Adam to Dr. Carter. And what is to become of us then? For it is written—"Cursed is every one, that continueth "not in all things that are written in the book of the "law, to do them." Here faith alone can help us, which assures us, there is a Person who has done all for us. This person is Christ: and he it is, that is described in this 15th psalm; as appears to a demonstration, by comparing it with the 24th, where the same question is asked, and the same perfect character drawn; and then it follows—"Lift up your "heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlast-"ing doors, and the King of glory shall come in." He was to "ascend into the hill of the Lord, to "abide in his holy place," till his return from thence, in his glorious majesty, to give his people the blessing, even life for evermore[1]. Let us, his ministers, above all others, take care that, when he comes, we are "found in him, not having our own righteousness, "which is by the law, but the righteousness which "is by faith in Jesus Christ;" ever remembering, that the reason why his righteousness is effectual to save us all is, because the person who performed it

[1] For this reason, our Church has appointed the 15th for one of the proper psalms on *Ascension-day* in the morning, as she has the 24th in the afternoon.

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was Jehovah—"This is his name whereby he shall "be called, Jehovah our righteousness."

But to return to our author. The next sentence, that he has made the subject of his remarks, is in the same page with the last, and runs thus—"Have we "not, besides, lived to hear of a guardian of Christia-"nity moving the lay powers to expunge a creed out "of the service of the church, only because it con-"tains the faith he has subscribed to, and sworn to "defend; by which subscription to the Christian "faith, he holds the dignity, that empowers him to "move for its overthrow?" At this, he grows very uneasy; which I am sorry to see, because it looks as if something hurt him. And though we have been all along so very intimate and free, he puts on a most dismal face, and formally "begs leave to interrogate "me solemnly." His first set of interrogatories may be reduced to this one—"Pray, sir, how did you "know what you said to be true?" To which I humbly crave leave, in my turn, with all due solemnity, to answer, that, as it certainly is true, he should in charity have supposed that I knew it to be so, when I said it; which, for his satisfaction, I assure him I did, by private letters of indubitable authority. But, after all,

"Should the fact be true," says he, when he knew it was true, "what is the nature of it?" Why certainly it is only a proposal made to remove the Athanasian and Nicene creeds, and alter the Act of Uniformity, to open the way for heretics and schismatics, which has been so strangely choked up, for many hundred years, with creeds and liturgies; and

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this proposal made by one, who has undertaken to guard the faith, and be a father to the church. There is nothing more in it. That is what "he thinks "would be an improvement." St. Paul, I remember, once verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and to endeavour, as much as he could, the extirpation of the truth as it is in Christ, and the church, the pillar and ground of it. And, says the gentleman,

"Has not every bishop a right, or is he not, in "your own phrase, empowered, to move for any such "improvement?" Right and power are two things: otherwise the power of speech may give a man a right to talk treason.

P. 35. "Have not the same powers, that made "the liturgy, liberty to alter any part of it for the "better?" The making of creeds and liturgies belongs to the church. The secular powers may recognize and allow the use of them among their subjects; or they may refuse to do it; for which, as for their other actions, they must account to the only Ruler of princes. The church is not to take up arms and fight it out with them. She is to "hold "fast the form of sound words, and keep that good "thing committed to her," as a depositum, that will assuredly be called for, and demanded at her hands, by him who intrusted her with it. And if she suffers for so doing, all that follows from it is, that she is conformed to the image of her Redeemer, who "for "this cause came into the world, that he might bear "witness to the truth;" which he did, when before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and

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sealed it with his blood. This is the true state of the matter; and I never yet heard of a British prince, or parliament, that assumed to themselves a power of setting aside the Divinity of Christ[m].

Ibid. "You say, the prelate moved the lay pow-"ers." I do, because none of the spiritual lords were consenting to a motion, the nature of which required that it should have been laid before them, as the proper persons to take care, *ne quid detrimenti ecclesia caperet*. After which it had been time enough to apply for the consent and approbation of parliament. But it was not without an infinitely wise reason, that he, "whose providence ordereth all "things, according to the counsel of his own will," permitted the motion to be made; whereby the Right Honourable the Irish House of Lords had an opportunity of bearing the noble testimony they did to the truth, by rejecting the abominable proposal with the indignation it deserved, and not so much as suffering the heads of so vile a bill to be read; for which they deserve to be mentioned with honour among all posterities for evermore.

Ibid. He asks me, "if I think Christianity could "not be supported by the Scriptures and the Apo-"stolical and Nicene creeds only?" As to the Nicene creed, that was to have gone with the Athanasian.

[m] On the contrary, by an Act in the 9th and 10th of William the Third, it is made *ipso facto* forfeiture of all places and employments, civil as well as ecclesiastical, to deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God. The second offence deprives the offender of all benefit of the law, incapacitates him for inheriting, and he is imprisoned three years, without bail.

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But to answer directly to the point. The apostle's creed was sufficient at first.—Wherefore then serve the others? They were added, because of heretics, whose subtile prevarications[n] rendered these creeds necessary to guard the faith; which made Luther, with great propriety, call the Athanasian creed *propugnaculum symboli apostolici*. And I am very sure this is not a time for the church to part with any of her fences. Rather perhaps we have reason to pray —"O be favourable and gracious to Zion; build "thou the walls of Jerusalem!"

At p. 36. The gentleman has worked himself up into a most vehement passion, and rates me, as if he could beat my teeth down my throat. "YOU, "SIR, say this, and YOU, SIR, say that," when I say no such thing. If he does not compose himself, I shall be obliged to swear the peace against him, for putting me in bodily fear. Besides, for his own sake, I would have him be a little cool, because passion is the worst thing in the world for the face. It has often particularly a bad effect upon the eyes, and hinders a man from seeing his adversary's meaning; of which we have a very melancholy instance now before us. "YOU, SIR," says he, "roundly "pronounce that the prelate moved to expunge the "creed ONLY, for no other reason but, because he "had subscribed to it." My words are—"because it

[n] The reader may see some of the Arian chicanery displayed in its true colours, in the Appendix to a Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity from the exceptions of an Essay on Spirit, by the reverend and learned Dr. Randolph, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

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"contained the faith he had subscribed to, and sworn "to defend." Faith in the Trinity is the faith into which he was baptized, and which often before, and again at his consecration, he subscribed to, and swore to defend. And because the Athanasian creed contained the faith in the Trinity, for that reason, and that only, I still say, he moved the lay powers to expunge it. And it is no more than what he has himself said, in his Essay on Spirit[o]; a book, which, as a learned and pious prelate of the Irish church very justly observed, *ought to have been burnt by the hands of the common hangman, as soon as it was published.* But it has received its death's wound[p], and —I war not with the dead.

P. 34. For fear of accidents the author has given us a confession of his own, which is as follows— "I firmly believe, that the Scripture doctrine of the "Holy Trinity (as far as I can understand a doctrine "so mysterious, and certainly attended with its "share of difficulties) is truly expressed in the Arti-"cles of the Church of England." Now, though I have no right to call upon him for a confession of his faith, yet as he has given us one, thinking, I suppose (and indeed justly enough), that, after what he had written, it was high time; I shall take the liberty to say, that I could have wished the qualifying parenthesis had not been thrown into the middle of this

[o] I call the Essay on Spirit his, because I am assured upon good evidence, which I am ready to produce when called upon, that his lordship has owned himself the author of it.

[p] See Dr. Randolph's Vindication, and Mr. Jones's Answer.

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confession, about the doctrine having its share of difficulties; because it is one thing to understand fully the precise manner *how* these three are one, a task to which reason is wholly inadequate; but it is quite another thing to give testimony to the truth of God, when he tells us *they are so;* for the doing of which, an adequate knowledge of the manner of their existence is by no means necessary. However, I cannot but hope the gentleman believes the doctrine; though it is somewhat odd to see him argue so zealously against one who does believe it, and for those who certainly do not.

P. 38. There are three sentences more cited from the sermon, without any remarks. What they are cited to prove, I know not, unless it be that the person citing them had not read Scripture enough to understand them.

P. 41. "Mr. Hutchinson treats the duties taught "by nature and reason, as the religion of the devil." 1st. He says, that nature and reason were made to learn duties, not to teach them. 2dly. An imperfect system of morality, patched together of the broken fragments of revelation, set up and enforced upon infidel no principles, against faith in Christ, or, to the exclusion of it—this is what he calls the religion of ANTICHRIST.

P. 42. He complains of us for "turning the plain-"est history into sublime prophecy[q]." As for in-

[q] I had determined, as the reader may see by turning to p. 186, to pass by the trite and stale objections on this subject, which have been so often answered by others. But the author's phrase-

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stance, the plain history of Hagar and Sarah, into the sublime prophecy of the Jewish and Gentile church; as St. Paul has done, quite in the Hutchinsonian way, without any ceremony; only prefacing his exposition with a censure of all those who were ignorant of that method of interpretation. "Tell me," says he, "ye that are under the law, do ye not "hear the law? For it is written,—Abraham had two "sons," &c. "Which things are an allegory." Had the spiritual interpretation been a whimsical or imaginary thing, St. Paul had never urged it as an argument; which he does, and draws his inference from it—"So then, brethren, we are not children of the "bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast, there-"fore," &c. And this shows the error of an axiom among the schoolmen—*Theologia symbolica non est argumentativa.* For so far is this from being the case, that no arguments strike the mind so irresistibly, as those drawn from the graphical delineations of the facts of Christianity in the histories and institutions of old. They constitute a species of evidence, which (as Mr. Leslie well observes) no other facts but those of Christianity ever had. This indeed must be said, that such kind of prophecy is a sign only to those that believe, who by reason of use have their (spiritual) senses exercised, and the eyes of their understanding enlightened, to see wonderful things in God's law. For those that are inexperienced in the things themselves, and perhaps deny their

ology was so very remarkable in this place, that I could not help taking notice of it.

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existence, can never be qualified to discern the prefiguration of them. Others will see, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, that enough of the Old Testament is applied in the New, to enable us to apply the rest, if we have but humility to receive the key of knowledge from Christ, and diligence to use it, in opening the secret treasures of wisdom, which are otherwise for ever locked up and hidden from our eyes. St. Paul, indeed, in his epistle to the Hebrews, has in a manner spiritualized the whole Bible. But his doctrine is growing out of fashion. For besides that his writings are full of type and figure, he was a preacher of passive obedience. And as I find in him, Rom. ix. 13. the words, "Jacob "have I loved," I am far from being clear that he was not a JACOBITE.

The author of the Word to the Hutchinsonians, in the course of his work, has said many fine things upon the virtue of charity. Indeed, by the frequent introduction of it upon all occasions, he seems to have been sensible, it was the subject he was qualified to shine upon. I beg leave to be an humble instrument of communicating to the world the lustre of some of the brightest instances of his shining in the practice, as well as speculation, of this lovely grace. It will occasion many pleasing sensations likewise in the mind of the reader, to observe how the Gentleman keeps pace all along with the Christian: and when they unite their beams, and pour upon him in one blaze, I wish they are not rather more than he can bear.

P. 5. "IF they were honest as to the end—a little

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"learning, and a great deal of conceit—his own crude "notions—vanity and impertinence—establish no-"thing but their own disgrace—P. 7. step forth pub-"lic reformers in learning, with no other qualification "but the contempt of it—Morality not within the "new system—P. 8. Hutchinsonian, enthusiastic, "new reformers—dictatorial, abusive, uncharitable "mode of preaching amongst these new reformers, "void of meekness and void of fear—P. 14. com-"fortably self-sufficient—P. 19. scarce attended "with common sense, or intelligible language—P. "20. the foolishness of folly—P. 24. gently, not so "flaming—insolence armed with arrogance—P. 31. "This Hutchinsonian zealot—P. 34. a false accuser "of one of his brethren—P. 35. inserted wickedly—"likewise inserted wickedly—P. 36. absolute viola-"tion of Christian charity—YOU—YOU—YOU, SIR "—that dangerous, that unchristian disposition of "soul—you must be contented to descend, and sink "into the deepest humiliation—pretended zeal"—So again, P. 38, "so defective in Christianity, as to "want even the prime virtue of it—so defective in "human learning, as this author and his brethren"—So P. 40. "contemners of sound learning—corrupt-"ers of genuine religion—P. 44. boisterous vain "pretenders, &c.—P. 37. You yourself cannot "possibly believe what you have asserted." And then there is an application to me of one of the most tremendous curses ever pronounced against the enemies of God and Christ, by which I am shut out from all hope of mercy, and placed in the number of the reprobate and finally impenitent, for ever

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and ever—"Be not merciful to them that offend of "*malicious* wickedness: for the sin of their mouth, "and for the words of their lips, they shall be taken "in their *pride:* and why? their preaching is of "*cursing* and *lies.*" The gentleman stopped a verse too soon—"Consume them in thy wrath, consume "them, that they may perish!" And in the last page, that I may not be divided in my death from those to whom Christian friendship has joined me in my life, he has shut us all out together from "the light of "the Lord God and the Lamb," and consigned us over to "the mist of darkness;" thinking it proper (as he says, after a long quotation from the Dunciad) to conclude an address relative to religion, powerfully, in the words of holy Scripture. And very powerful indeed they are—"These are spots in "your feasts of charity, feeding themselves without "fear: wells are they without water: clouds that are "carried about of winds: trees whose fruit wither-"eth: raging waves of the sea, foaming out their "own shame: wandering stars, to whom is reserved "the mist of darkness." Here the author, I perceive, being cautious, left out the words "for ever." But his caution comes too late; for, as it stands there, it can mean nothing less than damnation, whether the words "for ever" are added or not. But to go on—"When they speak great swelling words "of vanity, they allure those who were clean escaped "from them who lived in error. And while they "promise them liberty, they themselves are the "servants of corruption." The reader will give me

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leave to subjoin his motto—"Above all these things "put on charity, the very bond of perfectness!"

These, sir, are "hard speeches" against men, of whom their enemies themselves, being judges, must own, that they are sound in the faith, steady to the church, and regular in their duties. I say not this to boast; for sinners have nothing to boast of: but I am constrained to say it, in our defence. Personal failings and infirmities we have many; from all which "we hope to be saved, even as others, "through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." But, upon as impartial a survey as I can take of all that has been said or written against us, (for I pretend not to be without prejudices) I must declare, that "neither against the law, neither against the temple, "neither against Cæsar," is it proved that we have "offended any thing at all." Consider, therefore, sir, in the sober hour of thought and reflection, (for much does it deserve your consideration), consider again what you have said of us; and particularly the application you have made to us of those most awful and tremendous judgements of the Almighty against the impenitent enemies of his Christ. Think where you would be if he should deal with you as you have dealt with us. Consider that the praise or reproach of the world cannot last long. The world itself grows old, and nature, sunk in years, gives evident signs of her approaching dissolution. But, however, near the end of the world may be, our end cannot be far off. Then it will be found, (happy for us, if we consider it in time,) that "of

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"making many books there is no end, and that "much study" of worldly wisdom "is weariness of "the flesh," without profit of the spirit. We shall then perceive, that the Bible only will survive the fire that consumes the world, and be opened in heaven, when the light shall shine through every part of it, displaying Christ, its blessed subject, to the ravished eyes of all those who by night, in this dark world, have sought him in it, under the veil of its sacred and adorable mysteries. Experience will then convince us, that Scripture knowledge only lasts beyond the grave, and opens a passage through the waters of death, into the promised land, conducting us to the gates of the Jerusalem above, where is the throne of eternal judgement. Before that throne, sir, you, and I, and all of us, must shortly stand; and there must the secrets of all our hearts be revealed, and laid open, before heaven and earth assembled. And then will it be known, what were our motives in preaching, and yours in writing. As to all you have said against us, may God forgive you, as I am sure we do, for endeavouring greatly to injure the characters and reputations of men, who know not that ever they have offended you, or any one else! And if, in the foregoing pages, there is any misrepresentation or aggravation, it has slipt me unwittingly, and I am sorry for it.

And now, my younger brethren of the university, you see what there is to be said against us; and your candour will not pass sentence of condemnation, without reading what is said for us. If you find reason to do it then, we submit. The author of the

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pamphlet we have been considering talks of our proselyting and seducing you. We want not to proselyte you to any sect or party; for we never design to constitute a sect or party; but, as members of the church, subjects to the king, and sons of the university, we desire to spend our lives in their service; continuing steadfast and unmoveable, in the stations allotted us. And we hope there is no harm in wishing that you may do the same, living in due subordination and humble obedience to your tutors and governors in this place; for the prosperity of which all must pray, that ever pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They cannot stand separate, and can only fall together. May you so employ the calm days of peace and quietness you enjoy in this happy retirement, that you may be able, when you launch forth into the world, to weather all the storms of infidelity, heresy, schism, and sensuality, those four winds, that strive for the mastery upon that troubled sea! That so, wherever you are sent to preach the Gospel, and wage war with the enemies of man's salvation, your piety may adorn the church, and your learning do honour to the university. If there is any man, into whom we have inculcated principles contrary to these, let him stand forth, and declare it. But if to inculcate these be to seduce you—then we do verily own ourselves to be most exceedingly guilty.

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POSTSCRIPT.

I THOUGHT I had done here; but find myself obliged to take some notice of the reverend Mr. Heathcote, who (as it should seem by an advertisement of his, in capitals) has entirely overthrown Mr. Hutchinson. Upon looking into his book, I find he has indeed made quotations from him. Several of them contain great and important truths, against which Mr. Heathcote has said nothing. Some are mangled and misrepresented, as the reader may see, if he thinks it worth his while to turn to and compare them. And a few more passages are quoted for the severity of the expressions in them. But, in order to judge of their propriety or impropriety, it is necessary to know who are the persons spoken of, what is the nature and quality of the crimes charged upon them, and what the strength of the evidence that supports the charge. If, when these circumstances are duly weighed, they appear to be unjustifiable, we defend them not. This is a sufficient answer to all that is advanced by Mr. Heathcote.—Though, upon second thoughts, it may not be amiss, just to give the reader a specimen of the manner in which he uses those who are so unhappy as to fall under his displeasure. "We are told," says he, p. 85, "that Mr. Hutchinson never offended with "his tongue; never spoke with more warmth than

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"was strictly justifiable." And he refers to the page in the editor's preface[r], where he is *told* so. But in that page it stands thus—"That he never "offended with his tongue, never spoke with more "warmth than was strictly justifiable, WE SAY NOT." This method of quoting, together with the phrase *cabalistic theologue*, and other flowers of rhetoric scattered up and down, and, above all, the paradoxes in his system, demonstrate the truth of an assertion in his title page;—that he is ASSISTANT PREACHER at *Lincoln's Inn*.

[r] The reader will be pleased to observe, there is but one edition of that preface.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON

THE LIFE AND DEATH

OF

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

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PREFACE.

It is a fine remark of Lord Bacon, that "As wines which, "at first pressing, run gently, yield a more pleasant taste "than those, where the wine-press is hard wrought, be-"cause those somewhat relish of the stone and skin of the "grape; so those observations are most wholesome and "sweet, which flow from Scriptures gently expressed and "naturally expounded, and are not wrested or drawn aside "to common places or controversies[a]."

Observations of this kind may certainly be made to great advantage, on *historical* portions of Scripture more especially, since, as the same incomparable author tells us elsewhere, "Knowledge drawn freshly, and as it were in our "view, out of particulars, knows the way best to particu-"lars again: and it hath much greater life for practice, "when the discourse attends upon the example, than when "the example attends upon the discourse; as Machiavel "handled matters of policy and government, by discourses "of history and example taken from Livy[b]." The doctrines and duties of Christianity are, in like manner, best deduced from the facts on which it is founded. The narration furnisheth both matter and method for the discourse, which is read with pleasure and remembered with ease.

History and biography are frequently employed in the service of error and vice. They may operate as effectually

[a] Advancement of Learning, Book IX. [b] Ibid. Book VIII.

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in the recommendation of truth and virtue. Example shows truth as it were embodied; and, while it displays the excellency of virtue, demonstrates its practicability. The contemplation of faith, as it discovereth itself in the lives of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and saints, inclineth us to believe as they did; and the sight of frail mortals, like ourselves, who, by the divine assistance, surmounted all obstructions, and continued to walk in the paths of righteousness, naturally suggesteth to every beholder the question—What should hinder me from doing the same?

Opportunities for such exercises are continually afforded by the return of those days whereon we commemorate the heroic piety of ancient worthies, distinguished in the annals of religion; whose story presenteth us with occurrences, not like those related in secular histories, of use only to politicians and generals, but universally interesting; instructing us in the art of governing the little kingdom within; of achieving the greatest conquests, and gaining the most glorious victories; since "Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city;" teaching us how to live the life, and die the death of the righteous—a twofold task, which every man hath upon his hands, and in the performance of which he cannot fail, but at the hazard of something more valuable than crowns and sceptres.

The author of the following *Considerations* was directed, in the choice of his subject, by the circumstances of his situation; some parts of them having been delivered from the pulpit, as occasion called for them, in the chapel of St. Mary Magdalen College, upon the anniversary of the nativity of St. John the Baptist, before a learned and most respectable audience. The favourable manner in which they were then heard, hath encouraged him to revise, enlarge, and digest them into their present form. The reader hath now before him a complete history of the Baptist, extracted from the Evangelists, and methodized according to the order of time, in which the events appear to have

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happened; with such observations and reflections as the several parts of it seemed to suggest, for the confirmation of faith, and the advancement of holiness.

An attentive perusal of the subsequent pages may, it is hoped, be of service to the younger students in theology with a view to whom, and to those more particularly of the Society whose welfare and prosperity the author is bound by every tie to consult and promote, as they were at first composed, so they are now published; that, beholding the glories which display themselves in the exalted character here offered to their inspection, they may be fired with a noble ambition to bear their testimony to the best of masters, and, from a well-spent retirement, come forth bright examples of temperance and purity, zeal and knowledge, integrity and constancy, to preach repentance and proclaim salvation.

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CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

SECTION I.

Considerations on the Nativity of St. John, and the Circumstances that attended it.

THE lights of the intellectual, like those of the natural system, are not all of equal magnitude and lustre. In the church, as in the firmament, "one "star differeth from another star in glory." Each contributeth its share towards dissipating the darkness with which we are surrounded; but some, by their superior splendour, immediately attract and dazzle the eye of the beholder. Conspicuous, above others, is the character of St. John the Baptist, that bright precursor of the sun and harbinger of the morning, who arose to give notice of Messiah's approach, and to prepare the world for his reception. Burning and shining, he ran his course, proclaiming to the inhabitants of the earth, "Repent, for "the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" in other words, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; cast off "therefore the works of darkness, and put on the "armour of light[a]." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and

[a] Rom. xiii. 12.

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"arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee "light[b]."

Praise is ever valuable in proportion to the judgement and integrity of him who bestoweth it; and the panegyric is truly honourable, when the panegyrist is one who will not flatter, and who cannot be deceived. How then shall we raise our thoughts to conceive adequately of a person, whose encomium was spoken by the Son of God, and concerning whom that Son of God declared, "Among them "that are born of women there hath not arisen "a greater than John the Baptist[c]." After this declaration made by the Master, the disciples cannot well be hyperbolical in their praises of St. John, as the great pattern of repentance; the relation of Christ; the friend of the bridegroom; the herald of the King immortal; the glory of saints, and the joy of the world.

It is observable that the Baptist's nativity is the only one (that of Christ excepted) which the church has thought proper to celebrate. The days appointed for the commemoration of other saints are generally those on which they respectively ceased from their labours, and entered into their everlasting rest; the day of a good man's death being indeed the day of his birth, and this world no more than the womb in which he is formed and matured for his admission into a better, where there is neither crying nor pain. But the nativity of St. John being designed, by the remarkable incidents that accompanied it, to turn the eyes of men towards one who was far greater;

[b] Ephes. v. 14. [c] Matt. xi. 11.

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one, the latchet of whose shoes he confessed himself not worthy to unloose; the church keeps a day sacred to it, and directs us to begin our meditations by considering, as all Judea did when it happened, "what manner of child[d]" that should be, which was so wonderfully born.

He whose works are all wrought in number, weight, and measure, bringeth every event to pass in its proper season. The time approached which had been decreed in the counsels of the Most High, foretold by the prophets, and ardently desired by holy men of old, when the Son of God should be manifested, to redeem his people from death, and to lead them in the path of life. As this redemption was not to be effected by fleshly might and power, the spiritual king of Israel chose to make his appearance when the house of David was like a root buried in the earth; and therefore his forerunner was born "in the days of Herod the king[e];" days, when his countrymen were under a foreign jurisdiction, and the prospect on all sides was gloomy. True, indeed, it is, that the sacred lamp went not out in the temple, where the good old Simeón and the devout Anna served God instantly with fastings and prayers, and waited, as many others did, with earnest expectation, for the consolation of Israel. They were not discouraged by the gross darkness which then covered the earth, but rather concluded from thence, that the dawn of day could not be far off; as the mercies of Heaven generally come when man most wants, and, humanly speaking, has least ground to hope for

[d] Luke, i. 66. [e] Luke, i. 5.

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them; to the end that he may with thankfulness receive the benefit, and with humility give God the glory. And this may be a useful lesson to those who shall live in the latter days of the Gentile church, which are to precede the second advent of Christ; when they will behold the religion of Christians degenerated into an empty form, and their zeal and love frozen at the fountain; when daily multiplying heresies, like the frogs in Egypt, shall infest and contaminate all things; when infidelity shall rage and swell, and iniquity of every kind shall abound. Sights like these may confound and stagger those who shall then be ignorant of the Scriptures, and weak in faith. But an acquaintance with the divine dispensations will turn them into so many arguments for the truth of revelation, and the approach of the day of God. "When these things begin to come "to pass; then look up, and lift up your heads, for "your redemption draweth nigh[f]:" then be found with Simeon and Anna, in the temple, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

When we read of men who have done good in their generations, and shone as lights in the world, curiosity naturally leads us to inquire after their connexions and relations, and especially after the happy persons chosen to be the instruments of conveying such blessings to the church. The Scripture account of Zacharias and Elizabeth is concise, but comprehensive. "He was "a priest of the course of Abia," she was "of the daughters of Aaron," and "they "were both righteous before God, walking in all the

[f] Luke, xxi. 28.

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"commandments and ordinances of the Lord blame-
"less[5]." The course of Abia was the eighth in order of the twenty-four courses of priests appointed to relieve each other in the service of the temple, where, during their ministration, they resided in the chambers allotted them for that purpose; that so, being sequestered from the cares and pollutions of the world, they might "wait on the Lord without "distraction," performing the outward ceremonies of the law, and exercising their faith in the contemplation of those heavenly things shadowed out by them. This holy office Zacharias, in the worst of times, adorned and beautified with a correspondent holiness of life. The spirit of the sanctuary rested upon him, and manifested itself in the fruit of righteousness; a righteousness, which exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, approving itself in the sight of God, to whom are known the secrets of the hearts, as well as in that of men, who are witnesses only of the external deportment. Through the strength of this spirit, he walked in the path of an uniform obedience, an invariable observer of those ordinances which were at that time the sacramental means and pledges of pardon and acceptance, through faith in Him of whose advent he was a devout expectant. From such a father, and a mother worthy of him, who graced the line of Aaron by a like inviolable sanctity of manners, was the Baptist to descend; that the Jews might have no possible objection against him; that he might be a proper forerunner of one who was to make all the world

[5] Luke, i. 5, 6.

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in love with the beauty of holiness; that it might appear wherein true nobility of birth consisteth, namely, in a descent from persons consecrated to the service of God, and of an exemplary piety; and lastly, to assure us, that on the heads of those who, to a holy profession add a holy life, will, sooner or later, descend the choicest blessings which heaven hath to bestow on the sons of men.

But let not such be impatient because those blessings are for a while deferred. He who sends them, best knows the proper time of sending them; and often sees it necessary, for many reasons, to exercise the faith and patience of his servants; who may always rest satisfied, that in due season he will bring every thing to pass which will conduce to their true welfare. The Scripture, having witnessed of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that "they were both "righteous before God, walking in all the command-"ments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," proceedeth in the very next words, to inform us, "that they had no child, because that Elizabeth was "barren, and they were both well stricken in years[h]." They who stand highest in the favour of God, may therefore, during the greatest part of their lives, want the external and visible marks of it, and lie under the burden of "reproach among men[i]," as was the case of childless women in Judea. But these two pious persons, when their condition, in this respect, seemed desperate, were upon the eve of felicity. For of parents at their time of life

[h] Luke i. 7. [i] Luke, i. 25.

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John was to be born; that so the miraculous manner of his birth might excite the attention of mankind, and dispose them to listen to his voice when it should be heard in the wilderness; and also, that it might prepare them for that great event which was taking place, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold; "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." In circumstances parallel with those of St. John, were born, of old, Isaac, and Joseph, and Samson, and Samuel, all of them illustrious forerunners of Messiah, in one or other of his three characters, prophetical, sacerdotal, or regal. And did not God intend, by so often causing "the barren woman to "keep house, and to become a joyful mother of "children," to make that power known by which the incarnation of the Redeemer and the fruitfulness of his church were to be effected in the latter days, when, according to St. Paul, the prophetical injunction of Isaiah was obeyed, "Sing, O barren, thou "that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and "cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child[k]?"

He who is employed in discharging with fidelity the duties of his calling, takes the surest way to obtain the continuation and increase of his heavenly Master's favours. A son was promised to Zacharias "while he executed the priest's office before God," as the ritual of the church enjoined, "in the order "of his course, and according to the custom[l]." The reflection of a pious writer upon this circumstance is no less just than beautiful. "One priest alone,"

[k] Isa. liv. 1. Gal. iv. 27. [l] Luke, i. 8, 9.

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says he, "intent on his duty, who diffuses the sweet "savour of Christ, and is constant in prayer, draws "down on the people more blessings than a great "number of negligent priests. A man ought," continues he, "to discharge all the ecclesiastical functions with the spirit of the sacred ministry, as before God, and under his immediate inspection; to "perform them *in order*, in his proper station, without ambitiously seeking a higher; to do nothing "merely of his own will, but to observe the well-established *customs*, as being the necessary securities of peace. This is the truth which these "shadows prefigured, and these the dispositions "worthy a minister of the true *temple*, which is the "church[m]."

The annunciation of the Baptist's conception happened at the time of incense, when his father, having put on the robe of honour, and being clothed, like the great Mediator whom he personated, with the garments of glory and beauty, entered into the temple, while the whole congregation of the people, assembled without, sent up their united prayers to be accepted at the throne of grace, through the intercession which was then making for them by the Levitical priest, acting in the name of him who was to "arise after the order of Melchisedek, and not "to be called after the order of Aaron[n]." While the joint prayers of priest and people were thus offered up with the blood of sprinkling and the sweet-

[m] Father Quesnel's Moral Reflections on the New Testament.
[n] Heb. vii. 11.

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smelling savour of the holy incense, an angel suddenly appeared to Zacharias as he was executing his office in the temple; that being the place to which those blessed spirits, when they visit these lower regions, ever delight to resort, as bearing the nearest resemblance to the happy mansions from which they descend.

But, whether it be that the glory of celestial spirits overpowers the faculties of human nature, or that man, conscious of having sinned against heaven, naturally trembles at the sight of a messenger from thence, we find the appearance of an angel had the same effect upon Zacharias, the blessed virgin, and the shepherds; they were all "sore afraid." Their minds must be first composed, and put into a capacity of receiving the heavenly tidings brought them by the good angels, who, like good men, manifest themselves by the gracious and encouraging manner of their address, and having removed all misconceived apprehensions, proceed to instruct and comfort those to whom they are sent: "Fear not, "Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife "Elizabeth shall bear thee a son*." Zacharias had prayed for the redemption of Israel by Messiah, and therefore was honoured by being made, in a wonderful manner, the father of his illustrious forerunner. The priest was anxious for the welfare of the church, and the man was blessed in his own private concerns. He sought "first the kingdom of God, and his righ-"teousness," and the blessing of a son was "added

* Luke, i. 13.

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"unto him."—"Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee "a son, and thou shalt call his name JOHN," that is, being interpreted, the *grace* or *gift*; "and many "shall rejoice at his birth:" not only thou shalt rejoice, and Elizabeth with thee, at the birth of a son so long despaired of, and such a son too, but it shall be matter of joy, at the time, to all who look for redemption; and afterwards, thousands and millions shall rejoice at the remembrance of it; the day shall be kept as a festival throughout all generations; with joy and gladness shall it be kept, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Encouraged by the example of Zacharias, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, be never weary of waiting for his loving kindness in the midst of his temple. Let it be the delight of their lives to execute their office, every one in that order and station in which he is placed. So will God make them to hear of joy and gladness, and grant them to behold the success of their labours for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of his people. The church, like Elizabeth, shall bring forth fruit in her old age; and her friends shall rejoice greatly when they hear that the Lord hath showed mercy on her[p].

Distrust of Providence and the accomplishment of its designs, when appearances are on the other side, will sometimes invade the hearts of the best of men; and Zacharias himself so far partook of the incredulous spirit which at that period had possessed the synagogue, that he "sought after a sign."—"Whereby

[p] Luke, i. 58.

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"shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my "wife well stricken in years." How different, in a parallel case, was the behaviour of his father Abraham, of which St. Paul has left us the following exalted description:—"Who against hope believed in "hope, that he might become the father of many "nations, according to that which was spoken, So "shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, "he considered not his own body now dead, neither "yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered "not at the promise of God through unbelief, but "was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being "fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was "able also to perform[q]." The demand of Zacharias, however, was complied with, and a sign was granted him in the punishment of his unbelief. The use of that tongue, which, instead of giving glory to God, had been employed in raising objections, was taken from him, and a silence of some months was imposed as a penance for the abuse of speech[r].

But when the wonderful child was born, who, even before his birth, entered upon his prophetical office, and gave testimony to his Saviour in the womb, then declaring, by his exultation, what he afterward did by words, "Behold the Lamb of God;" and Zacharias had acknowledged the GIFT of God, by direct-

[q] Rom. iv. 18.

[r] Conticescere paulatim oportuit omne Levitici apparatûs Choragium, quod ominoso hoc Sacerdotis silentio prefiguratum est; ut sola Messiæ docentis et benedicentis vox in Ecclesiâ audiretur. —Witsii Miscell. Sacr. II. 494.

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ing that his name should be JOHN; then the mouth of the father was opened; and, to show us the proper employment of the tongue when heaven grants the use of it, he "praised God." Faith restored what incredulity had taken away; "he believed, and there-"fore he spake." And his heart having been prepared, by silence and retirement, for the reception of celestial influences, he was now "filled with the "Holy Ghost," and brake forth into that divine hymn, which shall be the subject of the next section.

SECTION II.

Considerations on the Hymn of Zacharias.

AMONG the alterations in nature which notify the return of spring, no one is more pleasing, than the exchange of a long and melancholy silence, for that melody which then resoundeth on every side of us in the woods and fields. Solomon hath not forgotten this circumstance, in his short but lovely description of that delightful season: "Lo, the winter "is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers ap-"pear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds "is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our "land[1]." The advent of Messiah was announced, in a similar manner, to the church; and we may say of it, in the words of the Roman poet, which, like

[1] Cant. ii. 11.

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those of Caiaphas, contained much more than he was aware of who uttered them,

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo!

For now, the blessed virgin "magnifieth the Lord, "and her spirit rejoiceth in God her Saviour:" the father of the Baptist "blesseth the Lord God of "Israel, for having visited and redeemed his people:" the angels themselves descend in full choir, to perform an anthem in honour of their Lord and ours: and old Simeon closeth all with his affecting farewell to the world; "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant "depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine "eyes have seen thy salvation." Thus did all break forth into joy, and sing together, because "the Lord had comforted his people, and redeemed "Jerusalem;" because the Sun of righteousness, by his visitation of the earth, was putting a period to a dreary winter, and introducing, in its stead, a new and more glorious spring. And as spring is the *morning* of the year, Cowley's address to the material light, which is but a faint copy, may be applied to the great original himself:

When thou lift'st up thy radiant head
Out of the morning's purple bed,
Thy choir of birds about thee play,
And all the joyful world salutes the rising day.

The hymn which we are at present to consider, is that of Zacharias. The occasion on which it was indited, was the birth of St. John: the subject is the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus: the language is that of the Old Testament, old terms being trans-

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ferred to new things: the speaker is a priest and a prophet, "full of the Holy Ghost."

During a tedious interval of silence, Zacharias had beheld the accomplishment of the divine promise to himself; and he knew, likewise, that the Saviour of mankind would soon be born of his relation, the virgin Mary. We may judge, therefore, what pain and grief he felt, while restrained from uttering that "good matter" of which his heart was so full, that when at length God saw fit to remove the mound, it burst forth at once in an impetuous and irresistible torrent of thanksgiving:

1. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people*[t].

It was no new thing for "the God of Israel" to "visit and redeem his people." He had often done it when they were in affliction and captivity. But *so* to visit and redeem, was not all that he intended to do for his chosen. Through things temporal he was desirous that they should look at things eternal, and carry on their views from a bodily to a spiritual redemption, in which all his counsels terminated; a redemption to be effected by his visiting mankind, dwelling among them in a tabernacle of flesh, and in that tabernacle offering up the true propitiatory sacrifice; a redemption that should extend to Gentiles as well as Jews, and of both make one people, a new Israel, of which he should be the Lord God

[t] Luke, i. 68, &c.

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for evermore. How gracious this visitation! How astonishing this redemption! "Blessed be the Lord "God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed "his people,"

2. *And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.*

In the Old Testament, we read continually of saviours and deliverers "raised up" by God, to rescue his people, from time to time, out of the hands of their oppressors. But of them we may say, as the apostle does of the Levitical priests, "They were not suffered to continue, by reason of "death[u]." And, therefore, we may argue in one case, as he doth in the other, that no one of them could be the true Saviour of Israel, the subject of the promises. Neither Moses, who brought them out of Egypt, nor Joshua, who settled them in Canaan, was "He that should come," but they were still to "look for another;" and so on, through the whole calendar of temporal saviours, who, like the legal ministers, "served only," by their wars and victories, "to the example and shadow of hea-"venly things." "The body," or substance, in either instance, "was of Christ." For he who arose "a "Priest for ever," arose also "a King immortal;" a mighty Horn, or Power, of salvation; a Moses, to deliver us from this present evil world; a Joshua, to put us in possession of the heavenly Canaan; in

[u] Heb. vii. 23.

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short, every thing, to fill up every prefigurative character. This mighty Saviour, this omnipotent King of Israel, God raised up "in the house of his servant David," as he had promised, "that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne[w]." And to this agree the words of the angel, at the annunciation: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign for ever and ever over the house of Jacob; and of his kingdom there shall be no end[x]."

3. *As he promised by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began—*

In a matter of so great consequence as man's redemption, God left not the world without information from the beginning: so that wherever we find ignorance, it must be charged to the account of man, as having rejected, and not to that of his Maker, as having denied the necessary means of instruction. We see the Christian church now supported in her belief of Messiah's second advent, on which all her hopes are fixed, by the discourses of the apostles, as the ancient church was supported in her belief of his first advent by the discourses of the prophets. There is no more difficulty in one case than in the other. The ancients lived in faith, and so do we. They died in faith, "not having received the pro-

[w] Psal. cxxxii. 11. Acts, ii. 30. [x] Luke, i. 32.

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"mises," and so must we: for though some promises are fulfilled, yet others are not, nor can be, in this world. Our knowledge is not the less certain, nor our faith, built upon it, the less firm, because we have not exact and adequate notions of the *manner* of Christ's coming, the circumstances of the last judgement, and the glory that is to follow. The facts are sufficiently predicted; for an idea of the mode we must be contented to wait till faith shall give place to sight. And let the same observation be applied to the patriarchs and Israelites.

4.—*That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.*

The enemies and the salvation, here intended by Zacharias, are, without doubt, spiritual. Such a salvation, therefore, from such enemies, God "pro-"mised by the mouth of his holy prophets, which "have been since the world began." When he saved his people of old from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hated them, his mercy so displayed was a figure for the time then present, a pledge and earnest of eternal redemption; as if he had said, "Ye shall see greater things than these." And the psalms formerly composed to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian and Babylonian captivities, are now used, by the church Christian, to praise God for salvation from sin, death, and Satan: they are sung NEW in the kingdom of Messiah. "Old things are passed away, behold all things are "become new:" legal figures are vanished, and the

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terms employed to describe them are transferred to evangelical truths. When the prophets composed psalms on occasion of temporal deliverances, they looked forward to a future spiritual salvation; as Zacharias, in his hymn, the subject of which is a spiritual salvation, looks back, and has a reference to past temporal deliverances.

5. *To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant*—

The "mercy promised to our fathers" was, therefore, a spiritual mercy; and the "covenant" made with them was a Gospel covenant; for otherwise, God could not be said, by raising up Christ, to have "performed that mercy," and "remembered that "covenant." Accordingly, we are elsewhere told, "the Gospel was preached to Abraham[y];" and the covenant made with him is styled, "the covenant of "God in Christ[z]." The Gospel, then, was prior to the law, and was the patrimony of all the children of Abraham. "The law, which was four hundred "and thirty years after," whatever might be its intention, could not dispossess them of this their inheritance; it could not "disannul the covenant, and "make the promise of none effect." But if, on the contrary, it was designed to keep up, and further the knowledge of them; if it was a standing prophecy; if it was "a schoolmaster" by its elements training up and conducting its scholars "to Christ;" then

[y] Gal. iii. 8. [z] Ibid. 17.

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certainly nothing was wanting on the part of God. The Jews minded earthly things; but to infer from thence, that they were never taught the knowledge of things heavenly, would be a method of arguing too hazardous to be ventured upon: since, from the behaviour of many who profess the Christian religion, it might as fairly be concluded, that *their* Master promised nothing but "loaves and fishes." Israelites might set their hearts too much on "fields and "vineyards," forgetting or neglecting better things, as men are apt to do who are blessed with prosperity in this present world. But when they did so, they did wrong: prophets were sent to reprove the error, and judgements to convince them, that Canaan was not the end of the "covenant," nor a plentiful harvest "the mercy promised."

6. *The oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham—*

The amazing condescension of God, in vouchsafing, for man's satisfaction and assurance, to confirm his promise by an oath, is finely touched upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "When God made "promise to Abraham, because he could swear by "no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely, "blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will "multiply thee—For men verily swear by a greater, "and an oath for confirmation is to them an end "of all strife. Wherein God, willing to show to the "heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, "confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable

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"things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled "for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before "us[a]." O the goodness of God, who hath given his creatures the assurance of an oath! O the infidelity of his creatures, who distrust that assurance[b]!

7.—*That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear,*

8. *In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*

The promise, made with an oath to Abraham, was made, after the intentional sacrifice of Isaac, in the following terms: "By myself have I sworn— "that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiply- "ing I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, "and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be "blessed[c]." The objects of the blessing here promised are the faithful children of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles; the "seed," in whom they are blessed, is Christ; the manner in which he obtains the blessing, is by "possessing the gate of his ene- "mies," that is, by subduing them, and seizing their

[a] Heb. vi. 13.

[b] O beatos nos, quorum causa Deus jurat! O miserrimos, si nec juranti Domino credimus! Tertull.

[c] Gen. xxii. 16.

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strong holds; the blessing itself consisteth in a redemption from bondage under those enemies, and an admission into the service of God. Such is the substance and intention of the promise made with an oath to Abraham, as explained by Zacharias and fulfilled under the Gospel. In the mean time, between the promise and its accomplishment it pleased God to interpose a dispensation, which exhibited a visible representation of this great and important transaction in the case of the children of Israel, or the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh, who, after having been long detained in cruel bondage by Pharaoh and the Egyptians, were "delivered "out of the hands of their enemies;" and delivered for this purpose, that they might serve God with a prefigurative service, calculated to last "till the seed "should come to whom the promise was made." For thus Jehovah saith to Moses, "When thou hast "brought forth the people out of Egypt, they shall "*serve God* upon this mountain[d]." So that when, at the transfiguration of our Lord upon mount Tabor, Moses discoursed with him on the subject of "his "decease," or, as it is in the original, his EXODUS, "which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," may we not imagine to ourselves the deliverer of Israel addressing the world's Redeemer in some such words as these—By my hand the Lord God of Israel did once vouchsafe to bring forth his people from the afflicting bondage of Egypt; but thou shalt turn the multitude of the Gentiles from the power of Satan

[d] Exod. iii. 12.

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to God. I saw the Lord make a path through the waters for his redeemed to pass over; but thou shalt find a more wonderful way through the waves of death; and though the floods shall compass thee about, yet shall thy life be brought up from corruption. I beheld the chariots of Pharaoh and the mighty host of Egypt plunging in the deep, when the morning appeared; but thou shalt triumph over principalities and powers, and see them overwhelmed in the lake of fire. I led my people through the wilderness, and gave them a law which had "the "shadow of good things to come;" but thou shalt conduct thine through the world, and teach them to "worship in spirit and in truth." I went before Israel to the borders of the promised land; but thou art the true shepherd of souls, and they who follow thee shall "pass from death unto life."

Zacharias concludes his divine song with an apostrophe to the infant Baptist, as one who was designed by Providence to be the precursor of such a Saviour, and the publisher of such salvation:

> 9. *And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways;*
> 10. *To give knowledge of salvation unto his people for the remission of their sins—*

"The law *prophesied* until John," who succeeded it in its office of pointing out the Messiah, and spake the language of its institutions, when he said, "Be-"hold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin

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"of the world." "Remission of sins" is the doctrine in which the Christian religion justly glorieth, as that most necessary and fundamental point, in which every other religion fails. The Heathen confesseth himself to be in the dark; he guesseth only what is the will of God, whom he knoweth not. He hath not strength to perform what he imagineth to be such; and he understandeth not the meaning of the sacrifices and lustrations derived to him by tradition. The blood of bulls and goats cannot wash away the sins of the Jew; and his oblations, since the truth is come which they were intended to prefigure, are preposterous and impious. The Mahometan hath no evidence for the mission of his prophet, no argument for his religion but the sword, and no heaven but sense. The doctrine of "salva-"tion by the remission of sins," through faith in a Redeemer, was, from the beginning, the sum and substance of true religion, which subsisted in promise, prophecy, and figure, till John preached their accomplishment in the person of Jesus. Paganism was a corruption of it, before that time, as Mahometism hath been since; and modern Judaism is an apostasy from it. And shall we go away, and forsake our Redeemer? To whom can we go? He hath the words of eternal life: he only can give "salvation by the remission of sins." It is this religion which enlightens the understanding with true knowledge, and warms the heart with true charity: it is this which alone brings confidence, and comfort, and joy, and bids fear and despondency fly away: it is this which raises the soul, as it were, from the

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dead, puts new vigour into all her powers and faculties, and animates her to duty, by the powerful motives it suggesteth: it is this which is a counterbalance to the temptations of sense, by the promises made to our faith; which supports the infirmity of nature by the glorious objects proposed to our hope; and which triumphs over the opposition of the world, by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts: it procures us the only solid happiness there is in this world, and opens a way to the felicities of the next: it holds him out to us, who is our "shield" on earth, and will be our "exceeding great reward" in heaven; who "guides us with his counsel, and will, "after that, receive us to glory—Whom have we in "heaven, O Lord, but thee; and there is none upon "earth we can desire in comparison with thee*!"

11.—*Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,*

12. *To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

St. John was the morning-star, that preceded the Sun of righteousness at his rising; an event, the glory of which is due to "the tender mercy of our "God;" since towards the production of it man could do no more than he can do towards causing the natural sun to rise upon the earth. The blessed

* Psal. lxxiii. 24.

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effects of the day-spring which then dawned from on high, and gradually increased more and more unto the perfect day, were—the dispersion of ignorance, which is the darkness of the intellectual world; the awakening of men from sin, which is the sleep of the soul; and the conversion and direction of their hearts and inclinations into "the way of peace," that is, of reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ, to themselves by the answer of a conscience cleansed from sin, and to one another by mutual love. "Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, "happy is the people, whose God is the Lord. They "are the children of the light and of the day. Their "sun shall no more go down, neither shall their "moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be unto "them an everlasting light, and the days of their "mourning shall be ended."

SECTION III.

Considerations on St. John's Education in the Deserts.

All the information we have concerning St. John, from the time of his birth to that of his public appearance, is contained in the few following words—"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, "and was in the deserts till the day of his showing "unto Israel[f]." There, apart from the world, and

[f] Luke, i.80.

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under the tuition of Heaven, he was catechized in the principles of divine wisdom, initiated into the mystery of a holy life, and perfected in the discipline of self-denial;

> The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
> His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
> Remote from man, with God he pass'd the days,
> Pray'r all his bus'ness, all his pleasure praise.
>
> PARNELL.

This dispensation in the case of the Baptist, like many others relative to the prophets, was extraordinary and miraculous; consequently, not to be literally copied by any one, but in similar circumstances, and under a supernatural direction. Nor has the monastic scheme the sanction of so great an example; as St. John was under the obligation of no *vow*, but having finished his preparation in solitude, came forth to act his part upon the theatre of the world. And it is well known, that, even in those ages when mankind stood astonished at the austerities practised by recluses and eremites, the episcopal or sacerdotal character was reckoned as much superior to the other, as charity is better than contemplation. "In "solitude," saith a great master of this subject, "a man may go to heaven by the way of prayer and "devotion; but in society he carries others with "him by the way of mercy and charity. In solitude "there are fewer temptations, but then there is like-"wise the exercise of fewer virtues. Solitude is a "good school, and the world the best theatre. The "institution is best there, the practice here. The

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"wilderness hath the advantage of discipline, but "society furnisheth the opportunities of perfection[g]." To confirm this judicious state of the case, it may be observed, that the only perfect life which hath ever been led on earth, was a mixture of the solitary and social. Our Lord himself passed thirty years in the privacy of Nazareth, and then appeared in public to exercise his ministry; but still not without frequent intervals of retirement. "It was in solitude "that he kept his vigils; the desert places heard "him pray; in the wilderness he vanquished Satan; "upon a mountain apart he was transfigured[h]." But in public he preached the Gospel, and converted souls; in public he healed the sick, and cast out devils; in public he suffered, and, while he redeemed the world, set it a pattern of humility, patience, and charity.

From the circumstance of St. John's education in the deserts we may, therefore, venture to draw a conclusion which will be of general use with regard to all ministers of the Gospel, namely, that the solitary way of life is necessary to qualify them for the offices of the social; or, that he who would serve God acceptably in public, must first prepare himself for that purpose in private. The reason is, because no man is properly qualified to teach *wisdom* and *holiness*, who doth not himself possess them. And a little reflection will convince us, how needful retirement is for the acquisition of both.

[g] Bishop Taylor's Life of Christ, sect. viii. [h] Ibid.

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The toils undergone by all who have ever made any great proficiency in *wisdom*, plainly prove close application and deep attention to be requisite for its attainment. And they who imagine themselves to have discovered a shorter way, conducting them to it without study, will find, sooner or later, that they have mistaken their road. "Hardly do we guess "aright at things that are upon earth, and with la-"bour do we find the things that are before us[i]:" shall we then expect a knowledge of those which are of a high and spiritual nature, without any labour at all? The prophets themselves "inquired and "searched diligently what things the spirit of Christ, "which was in them, did signify[k]." The royal Preacher, endued from above with "largeness of "heart as the sand upon the sea shore," yet took pains, and those no slight ones, in the invention and disposition of his discourses. For, "in order to "teach the people knowledge, he gave good heed, "and sought out and set in order many proverbs; "yea, the preacher sought to find out acceptable "words, words of uprightness and truth[l]." And if Solomon were not exempted from study and meditation, no other man can have any title to hope for such a privilege.

But who shall be able to fix his attention, amidst the hurry and dissipation of life? Who can meditate on wisdom, with the noise of folly sounding incessantly in his ears? That blessed person who could suffer no distraction of thought from the objects

[i] Wisdom, ix. 16. [k] 1 Pet. i. 10. [l] Eccles. xii. 10.

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around him, withdrew from the multitude, that he might teach us to do the same, who, alas! are often unable, when alone, to confine our thoughts, for a few minutes together, to one subject. The world, like Martha, is "troubled about many things," and most about those which are of least concern; so that, besides the profane, the unseemly, and uncharitable discourses, which they must hear who are much conversant with it, the mind of a man suffers not a little from the variety of light and unprofitable conversation in which he is frequently engaged. This scatters the thoughts, and so indisposes them for any speculations that are great and noble, sublime and sacred, that some time is required to reduce the wanderers, to compose the spirits, and to restore that tranquillity of soul which is indispensably necessary for the prosecution of religious inquiries. And although the general assertion of a famous recluse, "that he always came out of company a worse man than he "went into it," savoureth too much of the cloister, yet whoever, as the world goes, should diligently note the times when he came out of company a *better* man than he went into it, might, perhaps, find his diary contained in a less compass, than at present he is apt to imagine.

Certain, however, it is, that for the productions of wisdom we are indebted to solitude, as the parent of attention. And therefore many, in all ages, have followed St. John into the wilderness, and chosen retirement, not out of any moroseness of temper, or misanthropy, but that they might give themselves, without let or molestation, to the pursuit of divine

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knowledge. In this situation they found themselves always at liberty to choose their companions. They could converse at pleasure with patriarchs and prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, with devout and learned bishops, and others, who once adorned the church by their lives, and have continued, since their deaths, through many generations, to edify her by their writings. Here they could rally their scattered thoughts, and fix them upon subjects, whence they might extract real profit, and durable pleasure. For meditations, while employed, in a general and cursory way, upon a variety of objects, like the rays of light diffused in the air, discover not the force and activity which they possess; it is close attention which collects and unites, and renders them operative. And an ability to bestow that close attention in a crowd, is granted to very few among the sons of men.

A dispassionate and unprejudiced state of mind is another requisite for the attainment of true wisdom. And as our sentiments take the tincture of our company, persons continually engaged in the world are very liable to be corrupted, as well as dissipated. He who passeth his time with men of base and antiscriptural tenets, will find, when it is too late, that "evil communications corrupt" good principles, as well as "good manners." The understanding will be blinded, and the heart hardened: wisdom will be shut out at every avenue; and the man will sit down in darkness and depravity, for the remainder of his days, determining with himself that there is no such thing as truth, without ever being at the trouble of

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making the inquiry. Happy, therefore, is he who, like St. John, spendeth his early days in privacy, and there acquainteth himself betimes with the excellencies and perfections of divine wisdom. For "Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away; yea, "she is easily seen of them that love her, and found "of such as seek her. She preventeth them that "desire her, in making herself first known unto them. "Whoso seeketh her early shall have no great travel, "for he shall find her sitting at his doors[m]."

Upon the same principle, we may account it one of the no small advantages which St. John enjoyed by his retreat into the wilderness, that he was thereby delivered from the vain janglings of the many religious sects and factions, at that time in Judea. For the authors and abettors of such as are naturally confined in their views, and obstructed in their search after truth, by having assumed it for a first principle, that "they are the men, and that wisdom must needs "live and die with them." Hence they become more solicitous about the defence of their own particularities against those of other sectaries, than careful to advance and propagate the general principles of true religion. This hath been but too much the case for some time past in Christendom, which, like Jerusalem before its destruction, is crumbled into innumerable parties, biting and devouring one another; insomuch that it is now difficult for one writer to lay down a position in theology, which another shall not immediately set himself to contro-

[m] Wisdom, vi. 1.

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vert with all his might, as heretical and antichristian. The dispute soon becomes a trial of skill, and the passions and prejudices of the combatants spread a cloud over the question, in which truth and charity often vanish together. Thus dark and tempestuous are these lower regions. But, by study and meditation in solitude, the Christian, in heart and mind, ascendeth to a purer element, from whence he beholdeth the storms produced by contending factions far beneath him, and expatiateth at pleasure in those fields of light and serenity which open themselves on all sides to his view. He consoleth himself by contemplating the church as she formerly subsisted in original purity and unity, and as she will hereafter exist in her triumphant state above, when her members of every age and nation shall all lift up their voices together, and make their sound to be heard as one, in giving glory to God, and to the Lamb. Disencumbered of passions and prejudices, he followeth after the truth which leadeth to godliness, and the wisdom whose end is salvation.

For the attainment of that wisdom a third thing requisite is divine illumination. Wisdom is one of those "good and perfect gifts," which "come down "from the Father of lights," and must be sued for with humility and fervour, in petitions like these—"Give me wisdom that sitteth by thy throne, and "reject me not from among thy children—For "though a man be never so perfect among the child-"ren of men, yet if thy wisdom be not with him, "he shall be nothing regarded—O send her out of "thy holy heavens, and from the throne of thy

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"glory, that being present she may labour with me, "that I may know what is pleasing unto thee. For "she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she "shall lead me soberly in my doings, and preserve "me by her power—For what man is he that can "know the counsel of God; or, who can think what "the will of the Lord is, except thou give wisdom, "and send thy Holy Spirit from above[n]?" Such gracious promises are made, and are ready to be fulfilled to the retired Christian. Let but the pollutions and distractions of the world be removed, and the wisdom which "is first pure," and then "peace-"able," will enter in. To receive the law, Moses was called away from the congregation to the top of the mount. Ezekiel beheld the visions of God, while a solitary captive upon the banks of Chebar. Daniel was informed concerning the restoration of Jerusalem, and the advent of Messiah, on the evening of a day dedicated to retirement, for the purposes of fasting and prayer. St. John was an exile in the desolate Patmos, when the glorious scenes described in the book of Revelation were made to pass before him, and he was enabled to extend his view, through all the different revolutions of empires, and periods of the church, to the end of time. And although we no more look for visions and revelations from heaven, yet from thence we expect, according to the most sure promise of our Master, the gift of the Spirit, to bless and prosper us in our studies, to open to us the Scriptures, and our understandings, that we may

[n] Wisdom, ix. 4.

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understand them. The same Spirit that gave the word, giveth likewise the interpretation thereof. And the latter, as well as the former, is best received in solitude, which appears to be thus admirably calculated for the attainment of *wisdom*, as it requireth study and attention, a dispassionate and unprejudiced mind, and that illumination which is from on high.

Sin, in the language of Scripture, is styled *folly*, to intimate to us, that true *wisdom* and *holiness* are inseparable companions. That, therefore, which conduceth to the acquisition of one, can never bear an unfavourable aspect towards the other, and solitude will be found the best nurse of *sanctity*, more particularly as it consisteth in the exercise of mortification.

This is a work which no man can set about, till he knoweth what those failings are, to which he is subject. And such is the power of self-love, that the person concerned is generally the last who comes to a knowledge of this most important point. If neither the fidelity of his friends nor the malice of his enemies let him into the secret, there is only a third way in which it is possible for him to become master of it, which is self-examination, constantly, sincerely, and thoroughly practised. And this requireth stated seasons of retirement; for want of which, we see those, who are engaged in a circle of business, or pleasures, living entire strangers to themselves and their own infirmities, though intimately acquainted with the follies and foibles of all around them. "In the night," the psalmist tells us, he communed with his own heart, and "his

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"spirit made diligent search[o]." Then silence and solitude afforded him an opportunity of scrutinizing the tempers of his soul, of discovering the maladies to which he was inclined, and of applying the proper remedies to each.

That medicines may be administered with success, it is necessary to cut off the provisions, which nourish and increase the disorder. The world, in the case before us, is full of such provisions; and therefore the patient must withdraw, for a while, from the influence of its temptations. "Where no wood is, "the fire goeth out[p]." Remove the object, and the passion will by degrees die away. In solitude, the pleasures and glories of the world no longer strike upon the senses, and solicit the affections. The soul, therefore, in this situation, like one escaped out of a battle to a place of security, hath leisure to reflect upon her condition, and to provide for her future safety. By looking into herself, she perceiveth how much she standeth in need of mercy and grace; and then she is naturally led to look up to heaven, as the only place from whence they are to be obtained. The former of these prospects filleth her with compunction, and causeth her to mourn for her sins with that godly sorrow which worketh a repentance never to be repented of; the latter encourageth her to pour forth herself in continual prayer to the God of her salvation, until he have mercy upon her. St. Peter, when reminded of his offence by the crowing of the cock, and the affectionate look of an abjured Master,

[o] Psal. lxxvii. 6. [p] Prov. xxvi. 20.

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went out from the high priest's hall where he was, and in solitude, with strong crying and tears, made supplication for pardon and peace. In retirement it is, that we find ourselves best able to practise all the holy arts of abstinence and self-denial, so needful for the perfecting repentance by mortifying the whole body of sin.

When men cannot be induced voluntarily to take this course, they are often forced into it by Providence visiting them with some heavy calamity, which by a stroke, like the amputation of a limb, severe but salutary, separating them at once from the world, shall oblige them to converse first with themselves, and then with God. Thus was Babylon's haughty monarch driven, in an extraordinary manner, from society, to learn humility in the fields and woods, until he acknowledged the power and the righteousness of the King of heaven. And thus the idolatrous and superlatively wicked Manasseh became a sincere and hearty penitent in the solitude of a Chaldean prison. Nor can we but admire, upon this occasion, the wisdom and goodness of God in sending sickness, as a preparative for death. Sickness takes a man, as it were, out of this scene of things, to fit him for another. It draws the curtain between him and the world, shutting out all its cares, and all its pleasures. It puts away his idle and noisy acquaintance far from him; and having thus secured his attention to the one thing needful, gives him ideas of the nature of sin, and the importance of death, the vanities of time, and the glories of eternity, to which he was before an utter stranger. Now appear to him, in

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their proper colours and natural deformity, the diabolical nature of pride and envy, the brutality of intemperance, the folly and torment of lasciviousness, the wretchedness of avarice, and the stupidity of sloth. Now he hath no longer any unlawful desires, and grieves that he ever had such. Now he is what he always ought to have been, and what retirement, at proper seasons, should and would have made him.

In morality, as in husbandry, the preparation of the soil is a great step towards the production of a plentiful harvest. If carnal desires are dead in us, all things belonging to the Spirit, will live and grow in us. If the affections are disengaged from things on earth, the difficulty of the work is over; they will readily and eagerly lay hold on things above, when proposed to them. If the snare of concupiscence be broken, and the soul be delivered out of it, she will presently fly away, on the wings of faith and charity, towards heaven. They who have duly practised mortification in the school of retirement, will, at their appearance in the world, afford it the brightest examples of every thing that is "honest, just, pure, "lovely, and of good report."

We may, therefore, conclude, that he who desires to undertake the office of guiding others in the ways of *wisdom* and *holiness*, will best qualify himself for that purpose by first passing some time in a state of sequestration from the world; where anxious cares and delusive pleasures may not break in upon him, to dissipate his attention; where no sceptical or sectarian spirit may blind his understanding, and nothing

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may obstruct the illumination from above; where every vicious inclination may be mortified through grace, by a prudent application of the proper means; and every fresh bud of virtue, sheltered from noxious blasts, may be gradually reared up into strength, beauty, and fragrance; where, in a word, "he may "grow and wax strong in spirit, until the day of his "showing unto Israel."

SECTION IV.

Considerations on the Prophecies relative to St. John in the Old Testament.

BEFORE we proceed to view the Baptist in the exercise of his ministry, it will be proper to look back to the predictions in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, concerning his office and character. We shall begin with that remarkable one, "Behold, I "will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming "of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, "and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest "I come and smite the earth with a curse[q]."

As there was amongst the Jews a general expectation of Messiah's appearance, at the time when he did appear, so an opinion likewise prevailed, that the world should be first prepared for his reception,

[q] Mal. iv. 5, 6.

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in some extraordinary manner. But wrong ideas of his appearance and kingdom introduced mistakes, with regard to the person who should precede and proclaim him. According to the notions then current, occasioned by applying to his first advent the prophecies which belonged to his second, Messiah was to come in power and majesty, to confer on the sons of Jacob dominion over the Gentiles, and make Jerusalem the metropolis of the world. And by misunderstanding this prediction of Malachi, they had imagined, that Elijah the Tishbite should return from heaven, as his precursor. For this reason it was, that when the sanhedrim sent a message to St. John, desiring to know whether he were Elias? he answered, "I am not:" not the Elias by them intended and expected. But that St. John was the person foretold by Malachi under the name of Elias, we have the declarations of our Lord himself to his own disciples, "Elias is indeed come[r];" and to the Jews, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was "for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him "hear[s]." By these expressions it was evidently Christ's intention to put his hearers upon the search after something more than the words, in the bare letter of them, might seem to contain. He directed them to go deeper into things, to study with attention the mission of the Baptist, his office and character; to compare together persons, times, and events; and so to discover, in what sense John was Elias, and why Malachi had given him that appellation.

[r] Mark, ix. 13. [s] Matt. xi. 14.

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But if they did this, and were once brought, in the person of John, to acknowledge Elias, who was to precede the Messiah, they must necessarily, in the person of Jesus, acknowledge the Messiah whom Elias was to precede. And therefore, as they were obstinately resolved not to own the Master, Christ knew they would not recognize the servant, or receive this saying concerning him. Thus when the chief priests and elders interrogated our Lord in the temple, "By what authority dost thou these things, or "who gave thee this authority? I will also," said he, "ask you one question, The baptism of John, was "it from heaven, or of men?" They perceived the dilemma, and having considered consequences, made the only *safe* answer, "We cannot tell[t];" an answer which did honour to their prudence and their caution, but certainly at the expense either of their wisdom or their honesty. As sitting in the chair of Moses, they ought to have known whence the baptism of John was; and if they did know, they ought not to have been shy of declaring it.

That St. John was the Elias predicted by Malachi, we have also the testimony of an angel[u], at the annunciation of his birth, who cites the very words of the prophet; "He shall go before him in the spirit "and power of Elias, *to turn the hearts of the fa-* "*thers to the children*," &c. And if this be the case, it follows by necessary inference, that by "the "great and dreadful day of the Lord," before the coming of which Elijah is promised, Malachi intends

[t] Matt. xxi. 23. [u] Luke, i. 17.

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primarily and immediately, the day, not of the world's, but of Jerusalem's destruction. For want of adverting to this, an opinion hath prevailed among Christian interpreters, that the whole prophecy relateth principally to the day of judgement, and to the appearance of an Elias, who shall then precede Christ. Whether there will be such an Elias at that time, and so the second advent will symbolize with the first in the circumstance of being previously proclaimed by a harbinger, like St. John, sent for that purpose, is a speculation with which we shall not at present concern ourselves, resting satisfied with the application of the prophecy, upon infallible grounds, to the person of the Baptist, the undoubted forerunner of our Lord, when he came to visit us in great humility.

God punisheth not sinners, till he hath first invited them to repentance. He giveth fair warning before he striketh; and a day of grace, in which mercy may be sought, and pardon found, always goeth before a day of vengeance and extermination. Elias was sent "before the coming of the great and dread-"ful day of the Lord;" John called his countrymen to turn from their sins, and believe in their Messiah, ere yet the desolations of Jerusalem exhibited to the wondering nations a specimen of that almighty power and inflexible justice, which shall one day lay the world itself in ruins.

The third chapter of Malachi containeth a most evident and clear prediction of Messiah's advent, with that of his precursor St. John: "Behold I will "send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way

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"before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall sud-
"denly come to his temple, even the messenger of
"the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall
"come, saith the Lord of hosts." The prophet goes on to foretell the effects of Christ's advent in the selection of a peculiar people, and the purification of a new priesthood, to offer new and acceptable offerings. "But who may abide the day of his
"coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?
"For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.
"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver;
"and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge
"them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto
"the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall
"the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant
"unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in
"former years;" pleasant as in the days when their fathers offered in faith, and the desire of Messiah's appearance was the ruling passion of their souls. The rest of the chapter is employed in reproving the rebellion, sacrilege, and infidelity of the Jews; and the fourth chapter opens with a description of the day fatal to Jerusalem—"Behold the day cometh
"that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea,
"and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the
"day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord
"of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor
"branch." For the consolation of the faithful, God by his prophet again foretelleth Messiah's advent, with the increase, victory, and triumph of the church —"But unto you that fear my name, shall the SUN
"OF RIGHTEOUSNESS arise, with healing in his

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"wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as the "firstlings of bullocks: and ye shall tread down the "wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of "your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the "Lord of hosts." In the mean time, "Remember "ye the law of Moses my servant, which I com-"manded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the "statutes and judgements." And then, when the law hath done its office, and prophesied for the appointed time, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet;" not the personal Elijah, but, as the angel expoundeth it, one to preach and live after the model of his example, in his "spirit and power." Thus, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where God foretelleth the union of Israel and Judah in the days of Messiah, he saith, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God, "and David my servant shall be their prince for "ever[w]." Not that Christ was to be David risen from the dead, or when he came, was to bear his name; but he was to be, in certain respects, like David, conquering the enemies, and sitting upon the throne of Israel. So the forerunner of Messiah was not to be Elijah descended from heaven, nor was he, at his manifestation, to be called by that name; but was to be like him in his office and character. Such a messenger, saith God, "I will send, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of "the Lord," that is, the day that should "burn "like an oven," the day of Jerusalem's destruction, mentioned in the first verse. "And he shall turn

[w] Ezek. xxxvii. 23.

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"the heart of the fathers to the children, and the "heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and "smite the earth," or the land, "with a curse." In the citation of this passage by the angel, one part of it is paraphrased—"To turn the hearts of the "fathers to the children, *and the disobedient to the* "*wisdom of the just*[x]." The meaning of the whole seems to be, either that men of every age and every disposition should be united in truth and charity; or, as some learned expositors understand the passage, that St. John should bring many of the Jews to have the same heart and mind which their fathers and progenitors had, who feared God, and believed his promises; that so their fathers might, as it were, rejoice in them, and own them again for their children: in other words, that he should convert them to the faith of that Christ whom their fathers hoped in, and looked for; as it was said by the angel, "Many of "the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord "their God[y];" lest, all continuing obstinate in their unbelief, till the day when a rejected Saviour should visit an apostate people, the curse should be universal.

Beside these notices afforded us by Malachi, there is a prophecy on the same subject in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, to which St. John referred the priests and Levites, when they pressed him, saying, "Who art "thou, that we may give an answer to them that "sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I "am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make

[x] Luke, i. 17. [y] Luke, i. 16.

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"straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet "Esaias[z]." But let us take a view of the whole context, as far as it concerns our present purpose.

> Isa. xl. 1. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

The future manifestation of Christ's kingdom is represented to the prophet in spirit, with the concomitant signs and circumstances of it. He hears the voice of God directing his servants to comfort his people, by proclaiming certain glad tidings which had been communicated to them. These glad tidings were the tidings of the Gospel. The persons to whom they first came were Zacharias, the blessed Virgin, Simeon, and Anna, who composed sacred songs upon the occasion, and spake of Messiah's advent "to all such as looked for redemption in "Jerusalem[a]" The same tidings were afterwards published by the Baptist, then by Christ himself and his apostles, and have been ever since preached by their successors, whose commission still runs—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

> 2. *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

Good news should be related with a suitable

[z] John, i. 23. [a] Luke, ii. 38.

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aspect and accent. The manner should correspond with the matter. "Speak ye comfortably," or, as it is in the Hebrew phraseology, "to the heart of "Jerusalem;" let your words be as cordials, to revive and cheer her in the midst of her sorrows and sufferings. The topics of consolation, to be insisted on, are three. First, "Her warfare," or appointed service, "is accomplished;" the days of her continuance under the yoke of bondage are expired; the fulness of time is come, for her passing from that state into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; she will now be relieved from duty, and dismissed from the station on which she hath so long watched, in expectation of the promised redemption; she will be "delivered out of the hands of her enemies, to "serve God without fear." Secondly, "Her iniquity "is pardoned;" the expiation is about to be made, which all her sacrifices and lustrations prefigured, which all her prophets foretold; the blessed person i born, in whom God is well pleased, both granting and accepting repentance unto "salvation by the "remission of sins," that men may be "justified "from all things from which they could not be justi-"fied BY the law of Moses," although men were justified UNDER that dispensation, through faith in him that was then to come, according to the Gospel preached before unto Abraham. Thirdly, "She "hath received of the Lord's hand double for all "her sins;" she hath received greater benefits than she had deserved punishments; mercy hath rejoiced against judgement; where sin abounded, grace hath superabounded.

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3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God.*

Isaiah, while reciting the divine injunctions to those whose office it should be to "comfort Jeru-"salem," seemeth to break off suddenly, as one interrupted in his discourse by the sound of a voice[b]. And as if he had listened, and perceived it to be the sound of that voice which so many prophets and kings had desired to hear, and had not heard it, namely, the voice proclaiming the actual incarnation of Messiah, he breaks forth in transport, "The "voice of him that crieth in the wilderness!"

> Hark! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers;
> Prepare the way! a God, a God appears.

The voice which thus sounded in the prophet's ears, so long before it was really heard upon the earth, was that of the Baptist, who, at the proper season, was sent, to dispose the hearts and affections of men for the reception of their Saviour, when he should make his appearance.

4. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.*

[b] "Far from being the Messiah, or Elias, or one of the old "prophets, I am nothing but a VOICE; a sound, that, as soon "as it has expressed the thought of which it is the sign, dies into "air, and is known no more." FENELON.

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These are the words of the prophet himself, unfolding the counsels of God concerning the manner in which Messiah's kingdom should be established in the world, and the alterations which must necessarily take place in order to that end. "Every valley "shall be exalted;" to the poor in spirit, the lowly and contrite souls, the Gospel shall be preached, and they shall be exalted in faith and hope—"and "every mountain and hill made low;" on the contrary, pride of every kind, and in every shape, exalting itself whether in Judaical pharisaism, or in Gentile philosophy, against the knowledge of God, shall be made low, and subdued to the obedience of Christ: "and the crooked shall be made straight;" truth and rectitude shall succeed to error and depravity—"and the rough places plain;" every thing that offendeth shall be removed, and all difficulties and inequalities smoothed, till unanimity and uniformity prevail. Thus shall the way be prepared for the King of Righteousness to visit his people, to dwell in them, and to walk among them.

5. *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Immediately after the proclamation and preparation made by the Baptist, the Divinity was revealed in human nature, God was manifested in the flesh, seen and conversed with by all ranks and degrees of men, high and low, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and sinners.

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The accomplishment of this part of Isaiah's prophecy is exactly related by St. John the Evangelist, in the following terms; "The word was made flesh, "and dwelt among us, and *we beheld his* GLORY, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, "full of grace and truth[c]."

Thus we have seen under what character the Baptist is held forth to us in the predictions of the prophets concerning him, as one who should go before Messiah in the spirit and power of Elias, to proclaim and prepare the way for the advent of God incarnate. How perfectly, during the course of his ministry, he filled up this character, will appear in the subsequent sections.

SECTION V.

Considerations on the Appearance, Doctrine, and Baptism of St. John.

THE days of St. John's retirement were now ended, and he was to exchange the pleasures of contemplation for the far different scenes of an active life; to behold, with grief and indignation, the sins and follies of mankind, the sight of which must needs be more grating and afflicting to his righteous soul, than a garment of *camel's hair* could be to his body; to encounter the opposition of a world that would be

[c] John, i. 14.

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sure to take arms against him, from the moment in which he stood forth a preacher of repentance and reformation. But no good could be done to others in solitude, no converts could be made in the deserts; and he must therefore quit even the most refined and exalted of intellectual enjoyments, as every minister of Christ should be ready to do, when charity dictates an attendance on the necessities of his fellow-creatures.

Yet let it be observed, that St. John was thirty years of age, when "the word of God came to him "in the wilderness[d]," and commissioned him to enter upon his ministry; and the holy Jesus likewise was of the same age, when inaugurated to his office by the visible descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism: to intimate, perhaps, that neither the exigencies of mankind, nor a consciousness of abilities for the work, can be pleaded as a sufficient warrant for a man to run before he is sent, and take the sacred office upon himself, without a regular and lawful call. The institutions of God are not without a reason; and he will not be served by the breach of his commandments.

The place to which the Baptist first repaired is styled "the wilderness of Judea[e]," a country not like the vast and uninhabited *deserts* in which he was educated, but one thinly peopled, a comparative wilderness, chosen by him on account of its bordering on the river. Hither the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities and villages presently flocked in great

[d] Luke, iii. 2. [e] Matt. iii. 1. Luke, iii. 3.

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numbers, attracted by the uncommon sanctity of the new preacher, who thus came forth, on a sudden, from the deserts, like one from another world, without any connexions in this, that no attachment might take him off from the duties of his high calling, or any way impede him in the exercise of it; since a man's worst foes have often been those of his own household, and the ties of flesh and blood have been known to prevail, where tyrants have threatened and inflicted tortures without effect. And as there is nothing so directly opposite to the profession of a prophet, nothing which so soon or so effectually sullies his reputation, as a tendency to indulgence and sensuality; in him, who was "more than a prophet[f]," we must expect to find a perfect crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts. "What went ye out in the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft raiment[g]? No, the very reverse; a man, like his predecessor Elijah, coarsely attired; "his raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins;" and content with the plainest food that nature could provide for him; "his meat locusts and wild honey[h];" a man, whose person, habit, and manner of life, were themselves a sermon, and the best illustration of the doctrine he was about to teach; a proper person to prepare the way for Christ, and introduce the law to the Gospel; to show men what effect the one ought to have upon them, in order to dispose them for the blessings of the other; that mercy might save from the wrath

[f] Matt. xi. 9. [g] Ibid. xi. 8. [h] Ibid. iii. 4.

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which justice had denounced, and Jesus comfort those whom Moses had caused to mourn.

The actions of a prophet, who appears, like the Baptist, with an extraordinary mission, though they are not to be imitated by us according to the letter, may yet convey a moral of general use. There is no obligation upon us to be clothed with *camel's hair*, and to eat *locusts and wild honey*, nor are we commanded to abstain wholly from *wine*, as St. John did, according to the prediction of the angel concerning him, delivered at the annunciation of his birth, "He "shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and shall "be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mo-"ther's womb[i]." But who doth not here perceive, evidently marked out, the opposition between sensuality and the spirit of holiness, and the impossibility of their dwelling together under the same roof? "Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter, nor "dwell in a body that is subject to sin. For the "holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and re-"move from thoughts that are without understand-"ing, and will not abide when unrighteousness "cometh in[k]." As, therefore, "no man can say "that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost[l]," who speaks in the Scriptures, who enlightens our understandings to interpret them, and who gives authority as well as ability to preach that great truth revealed in them, every minister of Christ, who succeeds the Baptist in the blessed work of calling men to salvation, should mortify the lusts of the flesh,

[i] Luke, i. 15. [k] Wisd. i. 4. [l] 1 Cor. xii. 3.

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that the graces of the Spirit may live and grow in him.

By a thorough mortification of the flesh, St. John had gained a complete victory over the world, which had nothing in it that he wanted. And herein consisted that *greatness* of his character foretold by the angel; "He shall be *great* in the sight of the "Lord[m]." Earthly pageantry engages not the attention of the spirits above, unless it be to pity such as set their hearts upon it. They discerned something more truly great in the person of the Baptist, when he came forth from the deserts, than in that of a triumphant monarch at the head of his victorious army. "Behold," saith our Lord, "they that wear "soft clothing are in kings' houses[n];" look for them among the attendants upon the princes of this world, and not among my servants. They who thirst after temporal honours and advantages, must go where such things are to be had. And let them go any where, rather than come into the church with these dispositions. For he who would persuade others to despise the world, while the love of it appears to direct and govern all his own actions, can expect no better success than it may be supposed St. Peter would have met with, had he invited those who stood with him round the fire in the high priest's hall, into the service of that master whom they had just before heard him deny. "When thou art con-"verted, strengthen thy brethren:" attempt not to do it till then, lest thou not only fall into condemna-

[m] Luke, i. 15. [n] Matt. xi. 8. [o] Luke, xxii. 32.

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tion thyself, but lay a stumbling block in the way of the weak, and cause the name of God and his Gospel to be thus blasphemed through thy double-mindedness, while thy life is at variance with thy doctrine. He who undertakes to reprove the world, must be one whom the world cannot reprove. All eyes will be upon him; his actions, his words, his very gestures and looks will be observed and canvassed by his sharp-sighted enemies. It will therefore behove one, so exposed on all sides, to abstain from the least appearance of evil, to stand at the utmost distance from temptation, and to prevent even the possibility of a suspicion. The axe must be laid to the root, and the passions mortified, till the man become, in the emphatical language of Scripture, "dead to sin[p]," as a corpse is to the delights and concerns of life. "The dead know not any thing, "neither have they any more a portion in any thing "that is done under the sun[q]."

Strange, therefore, as St. John's appearance and manner of life might at first seem, they were presently explained, when he began to preach a doctrine harsh and distasteful to flesh and blood, as the garment he wore and the food on which he subsisted. "Repent ye;" that is, Be converted, or changed, in heart and mind, in principle and practice, from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from the flesh to the Spirit, from the world to God; "for "the kingdom of heaven is at hand[r];" a new and heavenly kingdom is about to be set up amongst you,

[p] Rom. vi. 2. [q] Eccles. ix. 5, 6. [r] Matt. iii. 2.

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with new and heavenly laws, under a new and heavenly king, the promised Messiah; and none but men of new and heavenly tempers and dispositions can possibly become the subjects of it. I am the person commissioned to prepare you for your happy change, by calling you to repentance, and to my baptism, which is "the baptism of repentance, for "the remission of sins[a]," through faith in him, "who "cometh after me," to confer pardon and forgiveness. I am the messenger foretold by Malachi and Isaiah, sent in this manner to prepare the way of him who is your King, your Lord, and your God, now ready to be revealed as the Saviour of men. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Thus did St. John lay the foundations of the evangelical edifice in mortification and self-denial; nor did his blessed Master afterward propose the glories of a crown to any but those who should be ready to take up their cross in the way to them.

The *appearance* of sanctity, put on by every impostor, is a proof of the influence which it hath, when genuine and unaffected, over the minds of men. The preacher will always be attended, who conforms to his own doctrine, and exemplifies it in his life, be that doctrine ever so rigid. No sooner was it known that John, the son of Zacharias, was come forth from the deserts, and had begun to preach, but "there went out unto him Jerusalem, "and all Judea, and all the region round about Jor-"dan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, con-

[a] Luke, iii. 3.

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"fessing their sins[t]." The discourses of the Baptist were sharp and piercing as lancets. He applied them home to the human heart, swollen with pride, and full of iniquity. And indeed, much anxiety and wretchedness might be relieved, much despair and suicide might be prevented among us of this land, if the members of our church would but follow her direction, and as often as their minds were oppressed, and they could not quiet their own consciences, go "to some discreet and learned minister of God's "word, and open their grief, that they might receive "the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly "counsel and advice."

The wisdom and goodness of God are seen in his manner of proportioning his aids to the exigencies of his people, and raising up reformers, when religion most needs their help, to revive the true spirit of it among men. If we view the state of things in Judea at two different periods, we shall soon perceive how seasonably Elijah was sent at one time, and John the Baptist, that second Elijah, at another. Each was an æra of distinguished corruption, but corruption of a different species. During the former, idolatry was the fashionable error, which had found its way into the court, and overspread the face of the church. The characteristics of the latter were, on the one hand, a pharisaical hypocrisy, a boast of moral rectitude, which existed only in theory, and a vain confidence in a law which nobody observed; on the other, a Sadducean infidelity, opposed to the

[t] Matt. iii. 5, 6.

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national faith and hope, denying a resurrection and future state of retribution. Elijah reclaimed the people from the worship of Baal to that of the true God; John called his hearers from unbelief, hypocrisy, and vice, to faith and holiness.

An ambassador of heaven, sent to preach truth to those who are captivated by error, and righteousness to those who are enamoured of sin, will never proceed far in the discharge of his trust, unless he be endued with a fervent zeal for the cause and the honour of him that sent him. Every holy person is not blessed with a spirit, any more than he is invested with a commission to appear in a public capacity, to reprove rulers and kings, to look an angry world in the face, and overcome all the opposition it can raise against him. Zeal, without holiness to support it, like a meteor, will blaze and expire. Zeal, without knowledge to limit and direct it, will waste and destroy, like the element from the effect of which it takes it name, when that has burst its bounds, and rules where it ought to be in subjection. But when knowledge and holiness are first obtained, it is zeal which must quicken and diffuse them, as the sun doth light and heat, for the benefit of the universe. "Then stood up Elias the prophet as fire," saith the son of Sirach, "and his word burnt like a lamp[u]." And our Lord, speaking of the Baptist, gives this account of him, "He was a burning and a shining "light[v]." His zeal was tempered with knowledge, for it gave light; and his knowledge was actuated by

[u] Ecclus. xlviii. i. [v] John, v. 35.

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zeal, for it was burning as well as shining. His sermons came warm from the heart of the speaker, and therefore found their way to that of the hearer, which was inflamed by them with the love, as his understanding was enlightened with the knowledge, of heavenly things.

Let us view and compare together the zeal of Elijah, exerted before idolatrous Israel assembled at mount Carmel, and that displayed by St. John, when he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism.

For the sins of the people, and the iniquities of the prince, in the days of Elijah[x], heaven was closed over their heads, the blessings of rain and dew were withheld, till the divine author of them should be again acknowledged, and famine stalked through the land, preaching repentance as she went. Israel felt the wound, but owned not the hand that inflicted it. The Almighty had constituted the prophet his vicegerent, and enjoined the elements to second him in the work of reformation. Ahab and his subjects, instead of consulting Elijah about the removal of their calamities, regarded him as the occasion of them, and the sole "troubler of Israel." At the command of God, he presents himself before the king, and tells him plainly, "Thou art the man." Israel is convened at mount Carmel, and reproved: "Why halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah "be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow "him." The false prophets appear on the side of

[x] See 1 Kings, xvii. and xviii.

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Baal and his kindred idols, to the number of nine hundred and fifty: on the side of the true God, Elijah stands single. The trial is made, and the grand question determined by a visible token of the divine presence. The nation returns to its duty, idolatry is punished in its votaries, the heaven gives rain, and the earth brings forth her increase.

On the banks of Jordan we behold, in the person of St. John[y], another Elijah, reproving the people of Israel, again departed from the Lord their God, while some, as the Pharisees, were hypocrites, and others, as the Sadducees, were unbelievers. Equally a stranger to fear and partiality, and endued with a prophetical power of discerning that serpentine subtlety and malignity which lurked under a specious outside, he rebukes them sharply, if by any means he might convince them of sin and lead them to true repentance: "O generation of vipers, who "hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" You, who seem to have taken possession of the inheritance, as if Messiah would never appear to claim it; you, who trust in yourselves that you are righteous, and despise others; come you to me, to be baptized with publicans and sinners? What can be the reason of all this? What can be your motive? The business in hand is not one to be trifled with. Hypocrisy has no place here; nor will the external show, without the internal work, in this case, avail to any thing but condemnation. "Bring forth "therefore fruits meet for repentance:" be not bar-

[y] See Matt. iii. 7, &c.

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ren, but "bring forth;" bring forth not leaves only, or fair professions, promises, and designs, but "fruits," or good deeds; and such as may be "worthy" of the tree on which they grow; such as may advance to maturity, and ripen into holiness. "And think not to say within yourselves, We have "Abraham to our father:" many will hereafter say that to little purpose. A descent from the loins of Abraham will profit none but those who are like Abraham. His true children are reckoned by faith, not consanguinity. Imagine not that the favour of heaven is hereditary and indefeasible in the line of Abraham according to the flesh, or that the divine promises must fail if not made good to you; "for "I say unto you, that God is able of these stones "to raise up children unto Abraham;" by the power of his grace he can make converts of nations at present utterly barren, unfruitful, obdurate, who shall inherit the blessing which you reject. Nor let the consideration, that Messiah has so long delayed his coming, induce you to be careless and negligent: "for now is the axe laid to the root of the tree:" believe me, he is at hand; your trial will soon be over, and your fate determined; the decisive and irremediable stroke will be struck, if not prevented by a timely repentance, a speedy and real change of heart and manners; "every tree which bringeth not "forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the "fire." Hitherto God hath borne with your errors and iniquities, but he will do so no longer. The law hath been given, and the prophets have been sent; but they are not regarded; and therefore

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he is coming, after whom no other messenger is to be expected from above. He will be the Saviour of all who, from a sense of their sins, shall be ready to embrace him as such. I am not that person, but the least and lowest of his servants, sent before to give notice of his approach, and prepare you to receive him. "I indeed baptize you with water unto "repentance;" but it is he who must grant remission of sins repented of; "he that cometh after me is "mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to "bear;" he brings with him almighty power from on high, to pardon sins, and confer grace; "he "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with "fire," to sanctify your natures, to purify, enlighten, and inflame your hearts with the desire and love of celestial objects. At his appearance, he will try and make manifest the tempers and dispositions of men. Deceit and hypocrisy shall not stand before him. "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly "purge his floor," sifting and winnowing that which is good from that which seems to be so; "and he "will gather his wheat into his garner," translate to heaven all that is pure, substantial, and fruitful; but he will "burn up the chaff," whatsoever is fallacious, light, empty, and barren, "with unquench-"able fire" in hell.

Such a discourse from such a person occasioned great searchings in the hearts of the people. They found all the vain opinions and presumptions, on which they had been accustomed to rely, suddenly taken from them, and nothing left but to put themselves forthwith under the direction of so holy and

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heavenly a preacher. With fear and trembling they applied to him, as the affrighted gaoler afterwards did to Paul and Silas, saying, "What shall we do "then[z]?" And when a penitent will ask advice of his spiritual guide, with a determined resolution to follow it, he is not far from the kingdom of God. He is sensible of his disease; and that, in the maladies of the mind, is half the cure. St. John in his answer, enjoins not legal, but evangelical sacrifices, exhorting his converts to show the sincerity of their conversion by loving their neighbours and relieving their necessities, as God had loved and relieved *them*. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that "hath none; and he that hath meat let him do like-"wise." These works of feeding and clothing the poor, including all other acts of mercy under them, are mentioned, as being the most necessary and indispensable; "and he," says a pious writer upon this passage, "who is not moved with his brother's "misery, deserves to find God unmoved with his "own."

Among others that came to be baptized, were some publicans, or tax-gatherers; a set of men, whose employment rendered them odious, as it often tempted them to court the favour of those who employed them, or to gratify their own avarice, by fleecing the people. These also were importunate with St. John, saying, "And what shall we do? "And he said unto them, Exact no more than that "which is appointed you." The reflections of the

[z] Luke, iii. 10, &c.

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writer above-cited, upon this case of the *publicans* and the following one of the *soldiers*, are so extremely sensible, judicious, and pertinent, that the reader will have an obligation to me, for presenting him with them, nearly as I find them. A wise preacher, like St. John, should distinguish the abuses of any state or condition of life from the condition itself; he should be so far from disturbing either the peace of private consciences, or the public repose, by condemning necessary employments, that he ought carefully to promote both, by contenting himself with only retrenching the disorders and injustice of those who exercise them. To be exact in not permitting any abuses in employments of this nature, is to serve the state: and those loose casuists who allow and authorize them, are pernicious to governments, by rendering these employments odious to the people, by favouring their murmurings, by encouraging acts of injustice, and thereby giving occasion to rebellion and revolt.

"And the soldiers demanded of him, saying, And "what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do vio-"lence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and "be content with your wages." St. John here, in the last place, regulates the duties of military persons, and shows, that no condition is excluded from salvation. The business of war is not in itself at all opposite thereto; since there have been not only *Christian soldiers*, but even great saints, and generous martyrs, of that profession. If all war was contrary to the Gospel, St. John would not have allowed those who presented themselves before

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him to continue in that state. However, it is certainly full of obstacles to salvation, which are with difficulty surmounted. A state, which is generally embraced either out of passion, or libertinism, or through a blind destination of birth, the exercises whereof are so violent and tumultuous, agrees but little with the exercises of Christianity, or the spirit of the Gospel, which is all peace, charity, and meekness. It is notwithstanding just and necessary, that there should be men to defend the state; but it is still more just and necessary, that this should not be done at the expense of salvation. The grace of God can do every thing: this is what ought to comfort those who intend to serve *him*, in serving their king and country[a].

One cannot but observe the general agreement and harmony which seem to have prevailed, at this time, among men, otherwise of tempers and dispositions very different from, and opposite to, each other. Jews and Gentiles, Pharisees and publicans, Sadducees and soldiers, all confess their sins, and participate of the same baptism; all struck with apprehensions of some impending evil, all flying from the wrath to come; forgetting their mutual hostilities and antipathies, and, like the creatures in the days of Noah, taking refuge together in the ARK. As if the prophecy of Isaiah had now begun to receive its accomplishment, the publicans, who, before the preaching of John, were ravenous as evening "wolves," became innocent as the "lamb." The soldiers, who

[a] Quesnel.

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had been formerly fierce and cruel as the "lion," became tame and tractable as the "ox," and submitted their necks to the yoke of the Gospel. Such of the Pharisees likewise, who, before their baptism, had been venomous as the "asp," or "cackatrice," did, by the worthy receiving of this baptism, and the grace which God gave them, become mild and gentle as the "sucking infant," or "weaned child[b]."

The concord thus produced in Judea by the sermons of St. John, and the tranquillity which the whole earth then enjoyed, sitting quiet, as it were, in expectation of her Lord, betokened the manifestation of the Prince of peace. "Then cometh Jesus from "Galilee to Jordan to John, to be baptized of "him[c]." After thirty years passed in retirement at Nazareth, the blessed Jesus was now to break forth, like the sun from a cloud, or a stream from the bowels of the earth, to enlighten mankind by his doctrine, and refresh them with the influences of his grace. The mighty concourse of all ranks and degrees of people attending St. John at the river Jordan, rendered that the fittest place where he might first show himself to the world. He who knew no sin, but was to take away the sins of all other men, presented himself in the crowd of sinners, as one of them, and solicited "the baptism of repent-"ance," not that water might sanctify him, but that he might "sanctify water to the mystical washing "away of sin."

[b] See the Works of Dr. Thomas Jackson, ii. 522.
Matt iii. 13, &c.

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Confounded at the thought of the Master being baptized by the servant, St. John at first "forbad "him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, "and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said "unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it be-"cometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he "suffered him." Jesus Christ, as condescending to stand charged with our sins, and, to that end, being "made under the law[d]," was to fulfil the "righteous-"ness" of the law, as it consisted in an obedience to ceremonial rites, as well as moral precepts. In the character and capacity of our substitute, he underwent circumcision, although he had no sin of his own to be cut off; and received baptism, although he had no pollution of his own to be washed away. What Christian can slight the ordinances of the church, when he sees the Redeemer, for his sake, submitting to observe them all?

No sooner was Jesus baptized, but he "came up "straightway" out of the river, like another Joshua, leading his people, through the waters of Jordan, to the land of promise. And as he was "praying," doubtless for success in the great work he had undertaken, "Lo, the heavens were opened, and the "Spirit of God," encompassed, we may presume, with a blaze of glory, "descended in a bodily shape "like a dove," speaking better things than that of Noah. In this form, emblematical of innocence and purity, it "lighted," settled, and abode upon him; the Father thus consecrating him to his office, by

[d] Gal. iv. 4.

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"anointing him with the Holy Ghost and with "power[e]," as the legal ministers were anointed with oil. And that no doubt might remain, the appearance was farther explained by "a voice from hea-"ven," saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom "I am well pleased." Such are the blessings which, in effect, do always attend the divine sacraments, when duly administered, with prayer. For then the heavens are opened, and the Spirit is given, to conform us to the image of a meek and holy Saviour, and, through him, to make us acceptable in the sight of God.

SECTON VI.

Considerations on the Testimony borne by St. John, at different Times, to the Messiahship of Jesus.

When a servant of God, through the power of divine grace, hath made some proficiency in holiness, and seeth the world and the flesh under his feet, it is not uncommon for his third enemy, the devil, to set upon him, and prevail over him, by puffing him up with a conceit of his own excellency, and so rendering his very attainments an occasion of his falling. The hurt which a man receives, in such a case, is proportionable to the height from which he falls; as

[e] Acts, x. 38.

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hell was first prepared for the tempter himself, because he fell from heaven.

It is not, therefore, the least conspicuous part of St. John's character, that a sanctity so extraordinary was not in him accompanied with any degree of pride, a worm which often cankers the fairest fruits that grow in the garden of God. He heard his own praise echoed from every quarter, and "all men," struck with admiration at what was about to happen, "mused in their hearts concerning him, whether he "was the Christ[f]." Nay, the Sanhedrim, that they might be resolved in so important a point, sent a formal deputation of "priests and Levites from Je-"rusalem, to inquire of him, Who art thou[g]." As the Baptist was, at that time, in high repute among his countrymen, and as secular designs are sometimes covered with spiritual pretences, it is not impossible, but that they might hope to flatter him into an acknowledgement of his being "some great one," and to frame of him a Messiah adapted to their purposes. But John was neither ambitious of an honour which did not belong to him, nor ashamed of a Master, who was about to appear in the form of a servant. He took no glory to himself, but remitted it all where he knew it to be due. "He confessed, "and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. "And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias?" that is, Elijah the Tishbite, whom they expected from heaven! "And he saith, I am not." "Art "thou ο προφητης, *the* prophet," meaning probably

[f] Luke, iii. 15. [g] John, i. 19, &c.

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"Jeremias, or one of the prophets," whom as it appears by Matt. xvi. 14. the Jews looked for to arise from the dead. "And he answered, No."

To all these inquiries, made by the priests and Levites deputed from the Sanhedrim, St. John returned answers which were true, but concise as possible, that they might take no advantage of his words, being aware that they grew envious of his fame, jealous for their own authority, and fearful of a Messiah, who would not answer their hopes, by gratifying their avarice and ambition. "Then said "they to him, Who art thou, that we may give an "answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of "thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in "the wilderness, Make straight the way of the "Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." This was informing them plainly enough, that the prophecies were soon to be accomplished by the manifestation of Messiah; and that repentance, according to his doctrine, and baptism, was the only preparation fit and necessary to be made for the reception of their King.

"They who were sent were of the Pharisees," and consequently could not relish tidings which put an end to all their schemes of temporal dominion and earthly grandeur, inculcating, instead of them, the duties of mortification and self-denial. This was not *their* system; and many, in every age since, have been of the same opinion, not caring to receive Christ, unless he came to them with the world in his hand. Finding, therefore, that John had no vanity to be worked upon, they had recourse to other

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measures, and began to dispute his commission to baptize; "They asked him, and said unto him, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that "Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"

St. John's reply shows his own humility, and, at the same time, bears testimony to the dignity of Jesus. "I indeed baptize you with water;" my baptism, like my preaching, is preparatory only, leading to another baptism of the Spirit, which shall cleanse the souls of penitents from every thing that defileth, through faith in Messiah and his heavenly doctrine. And this Messiah is not afar off, as you may imagine him to be; "there standeth one among "you, whom ye know not;" he appears like other men, lowly, unattended, undistinguished; he doth not, as yet, think proper to manifest his power and glory; but hereafter you will find him to be far other than he seems. As to myself, of whom some are pleased to entertain a high opinion, I am nothing: "This is "he, who, coming after me, is preferred before me," as much as the greatest master is preferred before the meanest of his servants, who is deemed unworthy to perform the least office about his person; "the "latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to un-"loose." This testimony did St. John give to the Saviour of the world, in the audience of the priests, and Levites, and the people, "at Bethabara beyond "Jordan, where he was baptizing." Intent upon humbling himself, that his great Lord and Master might be exalted, he declared himself a messenger only, sent to prepare his way; and every thing in him, and about him, spoke the same language.

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"The next day," an opportunity offered itself of pointing out the person of Jesus to the people; "John seeth Jesus coming unto him," probably to acknowledge him as his friend, relation, and precursor; "and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, "which taketh away the sin of the world:" Behold that blessed person prefigured in the law, and foretold by the prophets; one that is all meekness and innocence, patience and resignation, without offence in his mouth, without guile or malice in his heart, without spot or blemish in soul or body; the Lamb, which Abraham told his son Isaac, that God would in time provide; the Lamb, by the sprinkling of whose blood, true Israelites are preserved from the destroyer; the sacrifice, on which are laid the iniquities of us all; the Saviour, who, by expiating, taketh away the sin of the world, and conferreth righteousness on them that will believe in him, and accept it from him, being conformed to his example of meekness and lowliness. This, O all ye that behold him, "this is he of whom I said, After me "cometh a man which is preferred before me, for "he was," he existed, "ages before me," even from the beginning; he is fairer than the children of men, full of grace and truth; of divine glory, and celestial beauty.

To guard against any suspicion of collusion[h] between two persons, who, as relations, might be

[h] See the impossibility of any such collusion fully demonstrated by the reverend Mr. Bell, in his exact and elaborate Inquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

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supposed to act in concert, and favour each other's pretensions, St. John adds, "And I knew him not, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the "same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see "the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the "same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

From this passage we learn, that the visible descent of the Spirit was the sign given to St. John, whereby he was to know the Messiah. Jesus was brought up at Nazareth; St. John was educated in the deserts; and it seems to have been so ordered by Providence, that no interview had passed between them, after they had arrived at years of maturity. When Jesus, therefore, came to be baptized, St. John had no knowledge of his person. But, probably, on making the inquiries, usual at baptism, into his profession, name, and place of abode, and finding likewise, that he had no sins to confess[1], as all others had, he saw reason sufficient to conclude that this was the Christ; which might occasion his apology, "I have need to be baptized of thee," &c. And then, when Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit descended, and put the matter beyond all doubt. "I saw, and bare record that this is the "Son of God." So little account did these two wonderful personages make of their relation according to the flesh. From their infancy they had not conversed together; and when they met, it was in

[1] See Annotations on St. John's Gospel, by the Rev. Mr. Merrick, Part II. p. 50. and the Works of Dr. Jackson, by him referred to, Vol. II. p. 518.

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public, that John might bear his testimony; soon after which he was cast into prison, and saw Jesus no more. A higher, more important, and durable connexion, than any formed by consanguinity, engaged his attention, as it should do that of all Christ's disciples, according to those deep and divine strains of St. Paul; "The love of Christ constraineth us, "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, "then were all dead; and that he died for all, that "they which live should not henceforth live unto "themselves, but unto him which died for them, "and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we "no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known "Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we "him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, "he is a new creature: old things are passed away; "behold, all things are become new[k]."

The Baptist, having now lived to see the Lord's Christ, and show him to the world, was ready, like old Simeon, to depart in peace, and to make over his disciples to a better Master, who would never leave them nor forsake them. "Again, the next "day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; "and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Be-"hold the Lamb of God." Happy the Christian minister, who, like St. John, lives only to point out the Saviour to his people. And happy the people, who, like the two disciples, thereupon follow Jesus, inquire where he dwelleth, enter in, and abide with him.

[k] 2 Cor. v. 14.

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To one of St. John's disposition, it could not but be matter of concern to find envy and jealousy stirring in the breasts of his disciples, on account of the increasing fame of Jesus, as being likely to eclipse that of their master. For on occasion of a dispute which had happened about purification by baptism (disputes being seldom managed so as not to produce ill-will) "they came unto John, and said unto him, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to "whom thou barest witness, behold, the same "baptizeth, and all men come unto him[1];" intimating, that John was in danger of losing both his credit and his disciples, by means of one whom they took for a disciple, like themselves, as he had been baptized by the same master. So ready are men, at every turn, to form parties in religion, and to set up their respective teachers in opposition to each other; the consequences of which are, that the hearers waste that time in wrangling about a duty, which should be spent in practising it; and the teachers, if they have not good hearts and steady heads, preach themselves, instead of preaching Jesus Christ. "All men "come to him!" Great hath been the power of this argument to kindle the flames of emulation and dissension in the church; and the disciples of John did not doubt but that the consideration would excite in him those passions, which they felt working within themselves.

But he was not framed of materials liable to take fire from such a spark. On the contrary, a perusal

[1] John, iii. 26, &c.

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of the discourse which this address procured from him, is enough at any time to extinguish it, where it may have fallen. He made use of the incident, to bear his last and most noble testimony to the power and majesty of his Lord. So far was he from being offended, or chagrined, because all men resorted to Jesus, that he triumphed in it, as his glory and his joy, as the very end for which he was sent into the world to preach and to baptize. As if he had said—

Why are ye jealous? and why do envious thoughts arise in your hearts? Look not to me, or to any thing that is in me, but to God, who made me what I am, placed me in the station, and called me to the office designed for me: "a man can receive," or take to himself, "nothing, except it be given him "from above." And ye know the character in which I have ever acted: "Ye yourselves bear me "witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that "I am sent before him," as his messenger and minister, not to assemble disciples in mine own name, but to prepare men for him, and direct men to him. If therefore ye set so much by my authority, why do ye not credit my testimony? To Messiah, not to me, the church is to be gathered and united; and "he that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but "the friend of the bridegroom," who hath been honoured with a share in bringing about so happy an event, and who, when it is brought about, "standeth "and heareth him" conversing with his spouse, cannot therefore be grieved and vexed; he cannot envy the felicity of the bridegroom, or desire to take

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the bride from him; but most assuredly congratulates with him, and "rejoiceth greatly because of "the bridegroom's voice," finding that he hath so well succeeded in the work in which he was employed. This is my very case, when you come and tell me, that all men resort to the person, of whom I have so often testified, that he is the Christ: "this my "joy therefore is fulfilled." I have no greater pleasure than to hear, that disciples go from me to him. As the morning star, I only shone to proclaim the approach of the sun. Now he is risen, I go down; "he must increase, but I must decrease:" he will shine more and more unto the perfect day, while I shall set and disappear. And reason good why it should be so. That which is preparatory must give place to that which is perfective; a baptism of water must yield to a baptism of fire; a human instructor must cede to one that is divine. "He that is of the "earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth;" in spite of his best endeavours, he will savour of his original, and there will be an alloy of dust and ashes in all he saith; whereas "he that cometh from hea-"ven," I mean the blessed person of whom ye are so jealous, "is above all" the children of Adam. When the sun shineth in his strength, every star is obscured; and the world will perceive the difference between the discourses of the Master and those of the servant, as readily as it distinguisheth the glories of the day from the pale lustre and faint glimmering of those orbs, which serve in some measure to dispel the darkness of the night. According to the grace given unto me, I have declared the kingdom of hea-

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ven to be at hand, but when Messiah speaks of that kingdom, he speaks from his own knowledge; "what "he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth;" and yet, though I have said so much of him, and so many go to hear him, "no man receiveth his testi- "mony" as he ought to do. Think not this a slight matter, for no one can disbelieve him, without giving God the lie; "he that hath received his testimony, "hath set to his seal, that God is true," by allowing the credentials of his Son, and acknowledging in him the accomplishment of what was foretold by the law, by the prophets, and by myself. "For he," the Messiah, "whom God had sent, speaketh the "words of God," and that in a different sense from all others, who, from time to time, have been endued with such a portion of the divine influence as was meet for them; but "God giveth not the Spirit "by measure unto him," having decreed, that in him should all fulness dwell. "For the Father loveth "the Son," not as he loveth any of his faithful servants, but so as that "he hath put all things into "his hand," dispensing glory, honour, and immortality to mankind, through him alone. Be no longer envious and jealous, then, of his greatness, which is your salvation. If you would honour me, and at the same time serve your own eternal interest, receive in few words, the sum and substance of this my last testimony——"He that believeth on the "Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth "not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of "God abideth on him."

By this part of St. John's character and conduct,

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in how pleasing a manner are the ministers of Christ instructed, that they are to bear testimony to HIM, not to themselves; to seek HIS glory, not their own; that they should take pleasure in the success of their brethren's labours, by which the cause of their common Master is promoted; that the rising lights of the church should do honour to those who have gone before them, and the setting ones rejoice to be outshone by those who are coming after them; that envy and jealousy, in short, ought to have no place among the disciples of the Lamb of God, on whom descended and abode the celestial Dove.

SECTION VII.

Considerations on the Imprisonment of St. John, the Message sent by him to Christ, and the Answer returned to it.

ADMIRABLE is the advice of the son of Sirach to every one who is about to stand forth in the cause of true religion: "My son, if thou come to serve "the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set "thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make "not haste in time of trouble. Whatsoever is "brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient "when thou art changed to a low estate. For gold "is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the fur-"nace of adversity[m]." The reformer will proceed

[m] Ecclus. ii. 1.

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but a little way in his work, whose zeal is not backed with fortitude. The apprehension of danger, or even the frown of power, will alter his sentiments; he will see things in a different point of view, and turn with every blast of fashion or interest, till he himself believes every thing, and his hearers, offended and confounded, believe nothing.

Not so the Baptist. "What went ye out into the "wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind[n]." No: a column firm and immoveable, against which winds might blow, and waves beat, in vain: one who had fixed his principles, and considered well, before he entered upon action; one who began not to build, till he had first counted the costs; but who, when once he did begin, would be sure to finish.

A person unacquainted with the world, and the tempers of its children, might, perhaps, be surprised upon hearing, that a prophet like St. John, who spent his time in calling his fellow-creatures to happiness and salvation, and who coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel, was cast into prison. But, as the wise man observeth, "The thing which "hath been is that which shall be; and there is "nothing new under the sun[o]." Ahab, at the instigation of Jezebel, again thirsts after the blood of Elijah.

Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, had put away his own wife, the daughter of Aretas, and had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom,

[n] Matt. xi. 7. [o] Eccles. i. 9.

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contrary to the laws of hospitality as well as religion, he had seduced, while a guest in her husband's house[p]. The sanctity and integrity of the Baptist had begotten, even in Herod, a great veneration and reverence for his character. "Herod feared John, "knowing that he was a just man, and a holy, and "observed him; and when he heard him, he did "many things, and heard him gladly[q]." But the matter of Herodias was a tender point, on which the tetrarch was not disposed to hear the law, because he was not disposed to do it. He was determined to persevere in what was wrong, and his monitor to persist in telling him of it without reserve. "John "said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have "thy brother's wife." John, who had overcome the world, could not, either by promises or threatenings, be induced to recede from his duty, through hope of temporal good or fear of temporal evil. He was therefore soon convinced, by being carried to prison, that Herod had no farther occasion for his service. And who doth not rather wish to have been imprisoned with him, than to have glittered in all the glories of the throne of Herod? Happy John, sequestered once more from a troublesome world, to converse with God, and to meditate on that blessed place, and that blessed company, to which he was now hastening!

In this situation we find the thoughts of the Baptist employed, not upon his own sufferings, but upon

[p] See Josephus——Antiq. Lib. xviii. Cap. 6.
[q] Mark, vi. 20.

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the interests of his great Master, the fame of whose miracles had reached the prison, and sounded in his ears. "When John had heard in prison the works "of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples[r]—." Thus the afflictions and tribulations which a Christian must endure for a little season in the world, should serve only to quicken his desires after his Redeemer, of whose works, wrought in mercy for the children of men, he will often hear; and the contemplation of them should afford him continual delight in the time of his captivity, until the day of his enlargement shall come. With Paul and Silas, let him declare the glad tidings of salvation, and sing the praises of God in the prison-house. Let him inquire diligently, and take every opportunity of hearing more particulars concerning his Saviour, as also of placing others in the way of information. So will he copy the example of him, who, "when he heard "in prison the works of Jesus, sent two of his dis-"ciples," that they might be more fully instructed, as to his person and mission.

For that this must have been St. John's intention in sending them, is plain from the question which they were enjoined to ask; "Art thou he that "should come, or do we look for another?" The Baptist could not propose this question for his own information, but evidently for that of his disciples, whose prejudices in favour of himself, their first master, he found it so difficult to conquer. What he had hitherto said having proved insufficient for

[r] Matt. xi. 2, &c.

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that purpose, he now, in compassion to their infirmity, condescendeth to have their scruples propounded in his own name; affording us thereby a very useful hint, that in order to instruct others, we should abase ourselves, and know how to become weak with those that are so. For it often happens, that men need information upon some important point, who either through pride or bashfulness will not ask it, or through passion and prejudice will not receive it at our hands. In this case, the good, which we cannot do directly, we must contrive, if we can, to do indirectly, by proposing those questions ourselves, which we know that others in company want to hear answered, but cannot bring themselves to ask. This method of edifying the weak, without exposing their infirmities, will produce in them that love and confidence towards us, which, for their own sakes, we wish them to have. Whereas a contrary conduct, by provoking and alienating their affections from us, may put it out of our power ever to be of service to them again.

The same charitable plan is carried on by our Lord, who, in his answer, instructs the disciples by seeming to instruct their master: "Go," saith he, "and tell *John* what ye have seen and heard." And this may suggest a reason, why Christians in general should converse more upon religious subjects than they are wont to do, both asking questions, like St. John, and returning answers, like Christ, for the benefit and improvement of the by-standers, who may need information, though the person to whom one immediately addresseth oneself, should not. And

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many a man hath been the better, all his life after, for a seasonable word spoken in common conversation, which is often more regarded and attended to, than a formal discourse from the pulpit.

The best proofs of a divine mission, which man is capable of receiving, are miracles, evidently and incontestably such; miracles, of the reality of which the outward senses, the eyes and the ears, are competent judges; miracles wrought publicly in the face of the world, in the presence of enemies as well as friends; and that, not once or twice, but repeatedly; and these miracles expressly predicted, hundreds of years beforehand. Such were the proofs offered by Christ to the disciples of John. For "in "that same hour," while they were present, and before their eyes, "he cured many of their infirmi-"ties and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto "many that were blind he gave sight. Then said "he unto them, Go your way, and tell John what "things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind "see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the "deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the "Gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever "shall not be offended in me." As if he had said; I bear not witness of myself; my miracles bear witness of me. Only tell John what you have heard and seen, and he will teach you how to draw the proper inference. Isaiah, as he well knoweth, did foretell, that when Messiah came, he would perform such and such mighty works. You yourselves are eye and ear witnesses of the works done by me. Lay the premises fairly together, and you cannot be to seek for the conclusion.

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John had engaged his reputation as a prophet, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he baptized in Jordan, would answer the character of Messiah, and do the works predicted of him; as appears from John, x. 39, where we read, that Jesus, having escaped from the Jews, "went again beyond Jordan, "unto the place where John at first baptized; and "there he abode. And many resorted unto him, "and said, John did no miracle: but all things that "John spake of this man were true. And many "believed on him there." Malice itself cannot find reason to suspect a collusion, when prophecies and miracles thus unite their testimony, and proclaim Jesus to be the Messiah.

At his word, "the eyes of the blind were opened, "and the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame man "leaped as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb "did sing[a];" the leprosy, that foul, contagious, and obstinate disease, for which so many ceremonies of purification were appointed by the law, was healed at once; and the dead in their graves, hearing the voice of the Son of man, came forth. Every malady and infirmity, to which the children of Adam were subject, vanished at his presence, and confessed the almighty deliverer of his people. This, therefore, is "He that should come," nor let us think of "looking for another," to open the eyes of the understanding, and let in the light of heavenly knowledge upon ignorant and benighted minds; to remove all obstructions, formed by interest, prejudice, or

[a] Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

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passion, and give us the hearing ear; to restore and invigorate the will and affections, that we may make large advances in the course of duty, and run with delight the way of God's commandments; to loose the tongues which guilt hath tied, and tune them to hymns of praise and thanksgiving; to cleanse us, by his blood, from all sin, that leprosy which excludeth from the congregation of Israel, the camp of the saints, and the beloved city; to raise our souls from death to life, and our bodies from dust to glory. "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, "and the prophets, did write—Rabbi, thou art the "Son of God, thou art the King of Israel[t]!"

There is one particular in this answer of Christ, which remaineth yet unnoticed; "The poor have the "Gospel preached unto them." Our Lord here referreth to the celebrated passage in Isaiah, which, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he had expounded, and declared to be fulfilled in himself. "The Spirit "of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath "anointed me to preach good tidings," or the Gospel, "to the meek," or poor; "he hath sent me to "proclaim liberty to the captives,—to comfort all "that mourn, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil "of joy for mourning[u]," &c. The meaning of all the figurative expressions here used by the prophet, is this—that Messiah should, at his appearance, confer upon such as were disposed to receive them, the two great evangelical blessings, namely, remission of sins, and a participation of the Spirit of joy and

[t] John, i. 45, 49. [u] Isa. lxi. 1.

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gladness, with which God had "anointed him above "his fellows." The inauguration of Jesus to all the offices of the Messiah, by this divine unction, John had beheld, when, after his baptism, he saw the Holy Ghost descending upon him, and thereby knew him to be that "Rod," or "Branch of Jesse," on whom Isaiah had elsewhere foretold, that "the "spirit of the Lord should rest[w]." Nothing therefore could be more apposite, than this part of Christ's answer, "The poor have the Gospel preached unto "them;" the full import of which, considered as referring to the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and addressed to St. John, is as followeth—Go show John again, that the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of might and counsel, which Isaiah foretold should rest upon the Rod and Branch of Jesse, and which John saw descending and abiding upon me, in the likeness of a dove, at my baptism, is not departed from me. The unction of the Spirit was not given me for mine own use; nor is it spent or consumed, although it hath powerfully diffused itself to all about me. By it the poor are made rich, being instated in the kingdom of grace and of the Gospel, and anointed heirs unto the kingdom of glory. By it every contrite heart is healed; such as were shut up are set at liberty; such as were bound are loosed; and by it the yoke of the oppressor is broken[x].

We must not omit to mention the *end* for which,

[w] Isa. xi. 1, 2.

[x] See the Works of Dr. Jackson, vol. ii. p. 542.

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according to the prophet, all these changes were wrought in the converts to the Gospel; "That they "may be called Trees of righteousness, the planting "of the Lord, that he might be glorified." The "Rod," the "Branch of Jesse," the "righteous "Branch of David," were the known titles of the Messiah, or Son of David; and it was his glory, while he lived upon earth, to make others, like himself, "Trees," or "Plants of righteousness." This expression, as it standeth here joined with others plainly descriptive of evangelical benefits and comforts, unfoldeth to us the true nature of those wonders which Isaiah foretold should be wrought in the wildernes, and which he hath represented under so rich a variety of poetical imagery; such as streams of water breaking forth in the deserts, causing them to blossom as the rose; myrtles coming up, instead of briars; cedars, firs, and olive trees, instead of thorns, &c. The purport of these figurative predictions appears, by the passage before us, to be this; that the dry and barren places of Judea, where John baptized, and preached repentance, should, in the days of the Messiah, become a fruitful nursery of a new kind of plants, prepared for the celestial paradise. These were men of humble, peaceable, contrite hearts; such as poverty and disease had rendered those who came to be healed by Christ; such as the consideration of our sins and infirmities should render us all. To such is the Gospel of the kingdom preached, and they with joy receive it. "Blessed "are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of "heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall in-

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" herit the earth. Blessed are they that mourn; for " they shall be comforted."

To these beatitudes let us add one more, with which our Lord concludeth his answer to the question asked by John's disciples: " Blessed is he whoso- " ever is not offended in me." In other words— And now, blessed, thrice blessed are all they, who shall so consider the wonderful works done by me, as not to be offended at my poor and lowly appearance, during the time of my humiliation and suffering here on earth; or at the seeming harshness of my salutary doctrines to flesh and blood. For I well know, that many, though they have beheld me giving sight to the blind and vigour to the impotent, cleansing lepers, making the deaf to hear, and raising the dead to life again; yet, because the truths which I deliver are contrary to their interests, their pleasures, their pride, their prejudices, which they are determined not to quit, even for the kingdom of heaven; many, I say, will reject what they cannot but acknowledge to be the counsel of God, and put away the word of salvation from them. Let a man only suppress his inordinate desires of things temporal, and he will be disposed to hear what I shall tell him of things eternal. Let him cease to love the world, and he will cease to have any objection to the Gospel. Let but his heart be open to conviction, and when the evidence hath been once fairly laid before him, he will never again ask the question, " Art thou he that should come, or do we look for " another?"

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SECTION VIII.

Considerations on the Circumstances of St. John's Death.

We have now accompanied St. John through the several stages of his life. We have rejoiced with his parents and kinsfolk at his birth, and spent some time in contemplation with him in the deserts; we have stood by him, as a preacher and a Baptist, at the river Jordan, and have been made acquainted with the repeated testimonies borne by him, at different times, to the Messiahship of Jesus; we have heard him, like another Elijah, reproving another Ahab, and have visited him in prison, where the glory of his great Master, and the salvation of those committed to his care, still continued to be the objects of his attention. It remains only, that we behold him paying that debt to nature, from which the greatest of them that are born of women are not exempted. And here our acquaintance with him must end, till we meet him in the kingdom of God. Thus do scenes of real life pass swiftly away, and, when looked back upon, appear like those which are described within the compass of a small volume like this. In the course of a few years, the child, at whose birth we made merry, is become a man; he sickens, and dies, and we mourn at his funeral. Some gleams of success and prosperity, perhaps,

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brighten and adorn certain parts of his life, as the sun gilds the edges of a dark cloud, or imprints upon it the still more beautiful colours of the rainbow. But while we gaze, the sun sets, the colours fade, the bow vanishes, and "the place thereof knoweth "it no more."

Of prophets, as well as of kings, it may be observed, that there is generally but a short interval between their imprisonment and their death; the enmity which occasioned one, seldom leaving them till it have accomplished the other. And "more "bitter even than death itself is the woman whose "heart is snares and nets, and her hands bands[y]." Herod had thrown John into prison; but this would not satisfy Herodias. Even there she heard him still preaching upon the old text, and reproaching her with her crimes. "She had a quarrel against "him; ενειχεν αυτω, *she fastened upon him*, and would "have killed him, but," for some time, she "could "not[z]." For though Herod had not religion enough to produce in him the fear of God, he had policy enough to produce the fear of the Jews, among whom John's reputation as a prophet ran very high. Herodias, however, in her heart, had determined to effect her purpose by procuring, sooner or later, the execution of him whom she falsely deemed her enemy: as if sin could not be committed with impunity, while John was living to hear of it; as if his blood would not cry louder than his voice had done; or the head of the prophet could

[y] Eccles. vii. 26.

[z] Mark, vi. 19, &c.

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enter the palace, without reproving the adultery of the tetrarch. But an imperious lust, in the height of its career, can brook no obstruction; and were it possible, as well as necessary, the world itself would be blown up to make way for it.

Sin being once resolved on in the heart, an opportunity of committing it is seldom long wanting; and the mind is upon the watch, to embrace the very first that offers. "When a convenient day was "come, that Herod's birth-day should be kept, he "made a great supper to his lords, high captains, "and chief estates of Galilee." It is certainly no sin in a prince to keep his birth-day, or to make a great supper upon it. But how much it behoveth a man, at such times of rejoicing, to be upon his guard, lest unawares he be induced to sacrifice truth and conscience to mirth and gaiety, the melancholy catastrophe of this banquet may serve to show us; since neither Herod, nor any of his guests imagined, when they sat down to table on that fatal evening, how horribly their great supper would conclude. But so it happened, that, before the night was out, a deed was done, which displayed to all succeeding generations the malice and cruelty of Herodias, with the weakness and wickedness of Herod; teaching us, at the same time, that the greatest of prophets and the best of men are not more secure from violence than from natural death, but rather more exposed to it than the rest of mankind, if with fidelity and fortitude they execute the trust committed to them.

Herodias, by her lawful husband Philip, had a daughter named Salome, who condescended to grace

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the festivity by dancing before the company, in a manner which "pleased Herod, and them that sat "with him." A pious prelate of our church, in his contemplations on this occurrence, observes, that "dancing, in itself, as it is a set, regular, harmo-"nious, graceful motion of the body, cannot be un-"lawful, any more than walking or running." We may add, that it hath in all ages and nations been one way, and that a natural one, of expressing an uncommon degree of joy and gladness; on which account it was adopted into the number of religious ceremonies formerly enjoined to be observed by the people of God. But for a young lady to appear, as a dancer, before Herod and his "lords, high cap-"tains, and chief estates of Galilee," probably, when they were well warmed with wine, became only the daughter of an Herodias, educated by her own mother.

Herod, quite overcome and thrown off his guard by Salome's performance, makes her a foolish promise; and, as if that was not enough, confirms it with a rash oath: "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of "me, I will give it thee, to the half of my king-"dom." A very handsome recompense, one would think, for a dance! But it will appear presently, that the king had not offered enough. Half his kingdom would not do. Something was required more valuable than the whole of it, had it extended from Judea quite round the globe. Nothing would satisfy, but his honour, his conscience, his soul; the price which sin never fails to ask! The glorious golden opportunity of revenge was not to be lost. Herodias

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is consulted by her daughter, and lo, the soft, tender, delicate Salome re-enters, all athirst for blood—"Give me in a charger the head of John the Bap-"tist;" of a prophet; of a person whom thou knowest to be innocent, holy, upright. Make me this sacrifice, and I am content. With such eagerness and sagacity does "the adultress hunt for the "precious life!"

Bad as Herod was, the petition of Salome at first shocked him. "The king was sorry." He thought of John's character, the atrociousness of the murder, and the opinion which the world would entertain of the murderer. But the tide which had ebbed soon flowed again, and obliterated, in a moment, what had been written on the sand during its recess. The love of Herodias, the address of Salome, the festivity of the season, and the presence of the "lords and high "captains," who had been witnesses of the promise, and might possibly approve the proposal; all these circumstances on the side of the temptation prevailed. And perhaps Herod, upon recollection, might think that the supposed obligation of his oath would afford him a better excuse than he should ever be master of again, for complying with the importunity of Herodias, and taking off a monitor troublesome to them both. "For his oath's sake, and for their "sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her." Thus, if any extraordinary wickedness is to be transacted, religion must be made a cover for it. As if wrong became right, when acted in the name of God; and it were more acceptable in his sight, to massacre a prophet, than to repent of a rash oath,

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made to a foolish girl, at a drunken entertainment.

The Baptist's fate being thus determined, "immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and "beheaded him in prison." This deed of darkness must have been done in the season proper for it, the middle of the night; and St. John was probably awakened, to receive his sentence, out of that sleep, which truth and innocence can secure to their possessor in any situation. The generality of mankind have reason enough to deprecate a sudden death, lest it should surprise them in one of their many unguarded hours. But to St. John no hour could be such. He had finished the work which God had given him to do. He had kept the faith, and preserved a conscience void of offence. He had done his duty, and waited daily and hourly, we may be sure, for his departure. He was now, therefore, called off from his station with honour, to quit the well-fought field for the palace of the Great King; to refresh himself, after the dust, and toil, and heat of the day, by bathing in the fountain of life and immortality; to exchange his blood-stained armour for a robe of glory, and to have his temporary labours rewarded with eternal rest; to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; and as the friend of the Bridegroom, to enter into the joy of his Lord. From the darkness and confinement of a prison, he passed to the liberty and light of heaven; and while malice was gratified with a sight of his head, and his body was carried by a

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few friends in silence to the grave, his immortal spirit repaired to a court, where no Herod desires to have his brother's wife; where no Herodias thirsts after the blood of a prophet; where he who hath laboured, with sincerity and diligence, in the work of reformation, is sure to be well received; where holiness, zeal, and constancy "are crowned, and "receive palms from the Son of God, whom they "confessed in the world[a]."

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon uprears his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky—
He hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

MILTON.

[a] 2 Esdr. ii. 45—47.

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LETTERS ON INFIDELITY.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A LETTER TO DR. ADAM SMITH.

The doctrine of Epicurus is ever ruinous to society: it had its rise when Greece was declining, and perhaps hastened its dissolution, as also that of Rome; it is now propagated in France and England, and seems likely to produce the same effects in both. GRAY'S MEMOIRS, p. 202.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is of no consequence, gentle reader, to you, any more than it is to Dr. Smith, that you should know the name of the person who now addresseth you. Your mind cannot be biassed, either way, by that of which you remain ignorant. The remarks in the following pages are not therefore true, or false, because I made them; but I made them, because I thought them to be true. Read, consider, and determine for yourself. If you find no satisfaction, throw the book into the fire; regret (but with moderation, as becometh a philosopher) the loss of your sixpence[a]; and take care not to lose another in the same manner. If, on the contrary, you *should* find satisfaction (and it is humbly hoped you will find a great deal), neglect not to communicate to others, what has thus been communicated to you. Speak handsomely of me wherever you go, and introduce me to your kinsfolk and acquaintance. The enemies of religion are awake; let not her friends sleep.

I intended a much longer work; but, like the learned editor of Mr. Hume's Life, am necessitated to "gratify," with all possible expedition, "the impatience of the public "curiosity;" so eager is it to hear, what they who believe in God can possibly have to say for themselves. And if this will do the business, why should you be troubled with more? I am far from agreeing with Mr. Voltaire in all

[a] The price of the first edition of this Letter.

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his observations. But there is one, in which it is impossible to disagree with him. "I have said, and I abide by "it," cries the little hero, "that the fault of most books is, "their being too large." On reviewing what I have written, I really cannot see there is occasion to add another sentence.

Had I not chosen, for reasons best known to myself, thus to make my appearance *incog.* I would certainly have sat for my picture, and have tried to cast a look at my title page, as lively and good humoured as that of Mr. Hume himself. My bookseller, indeed, told me, it would have been a much more creditable way of doing the thing; "and then you know, sir," said he, "we could have "charged the other sixpence."

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A LETTER

TO

DR. ADAM SMITH.

SIR,

YOU have been lately employed in embalming a philosopher: his *body*, I believe I must say; for concerning the other part of him, neither you nor he seem to have entertained an idea, sleeping or waking. Else, it surely might have claimed a little of your care and attention; and one would think, the belief of the soul's existence and immortality could do no harm, if it did no good, in a *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. But every gentleman understands his own business best.

Will you do an unknown correspondent the honour, sir, to accept a few plain remarks, in a free and easy way, upon the curious letter to Mr. STRAHAN, in which this ever-memorable operation of *embalming* is performed? Our philosopher's account of *his own life* will likewise be considered, as we go along.

Trust me, good Doctor, I am no bigot, enthusiast, or enemy to human learning—*Et ego in Arcadiâ*—I have made many a hearty meal, in private, upon Cicero and Virgil, as well as Mr. Hume[a]. Few persons (though perhaps, as Mr. Hume says upon a like occasion, "I

[a] Life, p. 5.

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"ought not to judge on that subject") have a quicker relish for the productions of genius, and the beauties of composition. It is therefore as little in my intention, as it is in my power, to prejudice the literary character of your friend. From some of his writings I have received great pleasure, and have ever esteemed his History of England to have been a noble effort of *Matter and Motion.* But when a man takes it into his head to do mischief, you must be sensible, sir, the public has always reason to lament his being a *clever fellow.*

I hope it will not be deemed vanity in me likewise to say, that I have in my composition a large proportion of that which our inimitable Shakspeare styles, *the milk of human kindness.* I never knew what envy or hatred was; and am ready, at all times, to praise, wherever I can do it in honour and conscience. David, I doubt not, was, as you affirm, a social agreeable person, of a convivial turn, told a good story, and played well at "his favourite game "of whist.[b]" I know not that John the Painter did the same. But there is no absurdity in the supposition. If he did not, he might have done it—Doctor, be not offended—I mean no harm. I would only infer thus much, that I could not, on that account, bring myself absolutely to approve his odd fancy of firing all the dock-yards in the kingdom.

Concerning the *philosophical opinions* of Mr. Hume you observe[c], that "men will, no doubt, judge vari-"ously." They are certainly at liberty so to do, because the author himself did the same. Sometimes, to be sure, he esteemed them ingenious, deep, subtile, elegant, and calculated to diffuse his literary fame to the ends of the world. But, at other times, he judged very differently; very much so, indeed. "I dine," says he, "I play a "game at backgammon, I converse, and am merry with

[b] Life, &c. p. 43. [c] Ibid. p. 59.

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"my friends; and when, after three or four hours' amuse-
"ment, I would return to these speculations, they ap-
"pear so *cold*, so *strained*, and so *ridiculous*, that I can-
"not find in my heart to enter into them any farther[d]."
Now, sir, if you will only give me leave to judge, before dinner, of Mr. Hume's philosophy, as he judged of it after dinner, we shall have no farther dispute upon that subject. I could indeed wish, if it were possible, to have a scheme of thought which would bear contemplating at any time of the day; because, otherwise, a person must be at the expense of maintaining a brace of these metaphysical hobby-horses, one to mount in the morning, and the other in the afternoon.

After all, sir, friend as I am to freedom of opinions (and no one living can be more so), I am rather sorry, methinks, that men should judge so *variously* of Mr. Hume's philosophical speculations. For since the design of them is to banish out of the world every idea of truth and comfort, salvation and immortality, a future state, and the providence and even existence of God, it seems a pity, that we cannot be all of a mind about them, though we might have formerly liked to hear the author crack a joke over a bottle in his life-time. And I could have been well pleased to have been informed by you, sir, that, before his death, he had ceased to number among his happy effusions tracts of this kind and tendency.

For—(let me come a little closer to you, Doctor, if you please, upon this subject—Do not be under any apprehensions—my name does not begin with a B—). Are *you* sure, and can you make *us* sure, that there really exist

[d] Treatise on Human Nature, i. 467. In the Postscript to this Letter, a view will be exhibited of the HUMIAN system, taken exactly as it appeared to its author at six o'clock in the evening.

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no such things as a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments? If so, all is well. Let us *then*, in our last hours, read Lucian, and play at whist, and droll upon Charon and his boat[e]; let us die as foolish and insensible, as much like our brother philosophers, the calves of the field and the asses of the desert, as we can, for the life of us. But—if such things be—as they most certainly are—is it right in you, sir, to hold up to our view, as "perfectly wise and virtuous[f]," the *character* and *conduct* of one, who seems to have been possessed with an incurable antipathy to all that is called religion, and who strained every nerve to explode, suppress, and extirpate the spirit of it among men, that its very name, if he could effect it, might no more be had in remembrance? Are we, do you imagine, to be reconciled to a character of this sort, and fall in love with it, because its owner was *good company*, and knew how to manage his *cards?* Low as the age is fallen, I will venture to hope, it has grace enough yet left to resent such usage as this.

You endeavour to entertain us with some *pleasant conceits* that were supposed by Mr. Hume to pass between himself and old Charon. The philosopher tells the old gentleman, that "he had been endeavouring to open the "eyes of the public;" that he was "correcting his "works for a new edition," from which great things were to be expected; in short, "if he could but live a few "years longer," and that was the only reason why he would wish to do so, "he might have the satisfaction of "seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of "*superstition*[g]."

We all know, sir, what the word Superstition denotes, in Mr. Hume's vocabulary, and against what religion his shafts are levelled, under that name. But, Doctor,

[e] Life, &c. p. 47, et seq. [f] Ibid. p. 62. [g] Ibid. p. 50.

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Smith, do you believe, or would you have us to believe, that it is Charon, who calls us out of the world, at the appointed time? Doth not He call us out of it, who sent us into it? Let me, then, present you with a paraphrase of the wish, as addressed to Him, to whom it should, and to whom alone, with any sense and propriety, it can be addressed. Thus it runs:

"Lord, I have only one reason why I would wish to "live. Suffer me so to do, I most humbly beseech thee, "yet a little while, till mine eyes shall behold the success "of my undertaking to overthrow, by my metaphysics, "the faith which thy Son descended from heaven to "plant, and to root out the knowledge and the love of "thee from the earth."

Here are no rhetorical figures, no hyperboles or exaggerations. The matter is even so. I appeal, in the face of the world, sir, to yourself, and to every man, who can read and understand the writings of Mr. Hume, whether this be not, in plain, honest English, the drift of his philosophy as it is called; for the propagation of which alone he wished to live; and concerning which you are pleased to say coolly, "men will judge variously, every one "approving or condemning these opinions, according as "they happen to coincide, or disagree, with his own[h]." Our thoughts are very naturally carried back, upon this occasion, to the author of the *first philosophy*, who likewise engaged to *open the eyes of the public*—He did so; but the only discovery they found themselves able to make, was—that they were naked.

You talk much, sir, of our philosopher's *gentleness* of manners, *good nature*, *compassion*, *generosity*, *charity*. Alas! sir, whither were they all fled, when he so often sat down calmly and deliberately to obliterate from the hearts of the human species every trace of the knowledge

[h] Life, &c. p. 59.

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of God and his dispensations; all faith in his kind providence and fatherly protection; all hope of enjoying his grace and favour, here or hereafter; all love of him, and of their brethren for his sake; all the patience under tribulation, all the comforts, in time of sorrow, derived from these fruitful and perennial sources? Did a good man think himself able, by the force of metaphysic incantation, in a moment, to blot the sun out of heaven, and dry up every fountain upon earth, would he attempt to do it?—Tully had but a faint glimpse of the country to which we are all travelling; yet, so pleasing was any the most imperfect and shadowy prospect into futurity, that Tully declared, no man should ravish it from him [i]. And surely, Tully was a philosopher, as well as Hume. O had he seen the light which shone upon Hume, he would not have closed his eyes against it; had the same cup been offered to him, he would not have dashed it untasted from him!

"Perhaps our modern sceptics are ignorant, that without the belief of a God, and the hope of immortality, the miseries of human life would often be insupportable. But can I suppose them in a state of total and invincible stupidity, utter strangers to the human heart and to human affairs? Sure, they would not thank me for such a supposition. Yet this I must suppose, or I must believe them to be the most cruel, the most perfidious, and the most profligate of men. Caressed by those who call themselves the great, engrossed by the formalities of life, intoxicated with vanity, pampered with adulation, dissipated in the tumult of business, or amidst the vicissitudes of folly, they perhaps have little need and little relish for the consolations of

[i] Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. De SENECTUTE, ad Fin.

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"religion. But let them know that, in the solitary scenes "of life, there is many an honest and tender heart pining "with incurable anguish, pierced with the sharpest sting "of disappointment, bereft of friends, chilled with po- "verty, racked with disease, scourged by the oppressor, "whom nothing but trust in Providence, and the hope "of a future retribution, could preserve from the agonies "of despair. And do they, with sacrilegious hands, at- "tempt to violate this last refuge of the miserable, and to "rob them of the only comfort that had survived the ra- "vages of misfortune, malice, and tyranny? Did it ever "happen, that the influence of their execrable tenets dis- "turbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened "the gloom of human distress, or aggravated the horrors "of the grave? Is it possible, that this may have happened "in many instances? Is it probable, that this hath happened "in one single instance?—Ye traitors to humankind, ye "murderers of the human soul, how can ye answer for it to "your own hearts? Surely, every spark of your genero- "sity is extinguished for ever, if this consideration do not "awaken in you the keenest remorse, and make you wish "in bitterness of soul—But I remonstrate in vain. All "this must have often occurred to you, and as often been "rejected, as utterly frivolous. Could I enforce the pre- "sent topic by an appeal to your vanity, I might possibly "make some impression. But to plead with you on the "principles of benevolence, or generosity, is to address you "in a language ye do not, or will not, understand; and as "to the shame of being convicted of absurdity, ignorance, "or want of candour, ye have long ago proved yourselves "superior to the sense of it.—But let not the lovers of "truth be discouraged. Atheism cannot be of long con- "tinuance, nor is there much danger of its becoming uni- "versal. The influence of some conspicuous characters "hath brought it too much into fashion; which, in a "thoughtless and profligate age, it is no difficult matter to

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"accomplish. But when men have retrieved the pow-
"ers of serious reflection, they will find it a frightful
"phantom; and the mind will return gladly and eagerly
"to its old endearments. One thing we certainly know;
"the fashion of sceptical and metaphysical systems pass-
"eth away. Those unnatural productions, the vile effu-
"sions of a hard and stupid heart, that mistakes its
"own restlessness for the activity of genius, and its own
"captiousness for sagacity of understanding, may, like
"other monsters, please awhile by their singularity; but
"the charm is soon over; and the succeeding age will be
"astonished to hear, that their forefathers were deluded,
"or amused, with such fooleries."

You, sir, have read the preceding paragraph before; but this Letter may come into the hands of many who have not. It is the alarum bell to the admirers of Mr. Hume; and should be rung in their ears, till succeeded by the last trumpet.

And now, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a few questions? Why all this hurry and bustle, this eagerness to gratify the pretended "impatience of the pub-
"lic[k]," and satisfy it, that our philosopher lived and died perfectly composed and easy? Was there, then, any suspicion in Scotland, that he might not, at times, be quite so composed and easy as he should have been? Was there any particular book ever written against him, that shook his system to pieces about his ears, and reduced it to a heap of ruins, the success and eclat of which might be supposed to have hurt his mind, and to have affected his health? Was there any author, whose name his friends never dared to mention before him, and warned all strangers that were introduced to him, against doing it, because he never failed, when by any accident it was done, to fly out into a transport of passion and swear-

[k] Preface to Life, &c.

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ing[1]? Was it deemed necessary, or expedient, on this account, that he should represent himself, and that you should represent him, to have been perfectly secure of the growth and increase of his philosophic reputation, as if no book had been written, which had impaired it; it having been judged much easier to dissemble the fall of Dagon, than to *set him upon his stumps again?* I am a South Briton, and, consequently, not acquainted with what passes so far in the opposite quarter. You, sir, can inform us how these things are; and likewise, when the great work of *benevolence* and *charity*, of *wisdom* and *virtue*, shall be crowned by the publication of a treatise designed to prove the soul's mortality, and another, to justify and recommend self-murder; for which, without doubt, the present and every future age will bless the name of the *gentle* and *amiable* author.

Upon the whole, doctor, your meaning is good; but I think you will not succeed, this time. You would persuade us, by the example of David Hume, esq. that atheism is the only cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the fear of death. But surely, he who can reflect, with complacency, on a friend thus misemploying his ta-

[1] "I was a man of mild disposition, of command of temper, "little susceptible of enmity, and of great moderation in all "my passions. Even my love of literary fame, my ruling "passion, never soured my temper." Life, p. 32. Yet even by what is said of the reverends and right reverends — Bishop Warburton, Bishop Hurd, the *Zealots* (that is, the *Christians*), and of the resolution once taken to "change his name and to "settle in France," because his writings did not meet with sufficient encouragement—by these circumstances, I say, there seems to have been something of the *irritable* in his constitution. But these are trifles. My quarry lies not this way, at present. I fly at nobler game. The atrociou wickednesss of diffusing atheism through the land, is a subject which concerns every body.

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lents in his life, and then amusing himself with Lucian, whist, and Charon, at his death, may smile over Babylon in ruins; esteem the earthquake, which destroyed Lisbon, an agreeable occurrence; and congratulate the hardened Pharaoh, on his overthrow in the Red sea. Drollery, in such circumstances, is neither more nor less than

> Moody madness, laughing wild,
> Amid severest woe.

Would we know the baneful and pestilential influences of false philosophy on the human heart? We need only contemplate them in this most deplorable instance of Mr. Hume.

These sayings, sir, may appear harsh; but they are salutary. And if departed spirits have any knowledge of what is passing upon earth, that person will be regarded by your friend as rendering him the truest services, who, by energy of expression, and warmth of exhortation, shall most contribute to prevent his writings from producing those effects upon mankind, which he no longer wishes they should produce. Let no man deceive himself, or be deceived by others. It is the voice of eternal truth, which crieth aloud, and saith to you, sir, and to me, and to all the world—"He "that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he "that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the "wrath of God abideth on him[m]."

By way of contrast to the behaviour of Mr. Hume, at the close of a life, passed "without God in the world," permit me, sir, to lay before yourself, and the public, the last sentiments of the truly learned, judicious, and admirable Hooker, who had spent *his* days in the service of his Maker and Redeemer.

After this manner, therefore, spake the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, immediately before he expired:

[m] John, iii. 36.

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"I have lived to see, that this world is made up of per-
"turbations; and I have been long preparing to leave it,
"and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making
"my account with God, which I now apprehend to be
"near. And though I have, by his grace, loved him in
"my youth, and feared him in my age, and laboured to
"have a conscience void of offence, towards him, and to-
"wards all men; yet, if thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme
"to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And
"therefore, where I have failed, Lord, show mercy to me;
"for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of
"my unrighteousness, through His merits, who died to
"purchase pardon for penitent sinners. And since I owe
"thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take
"thine own time; I submit to it. Let not mine, O Lord,
"but thy will be done!—God hath heard my daily peti-
"tions; for I am at peace with all men, and he is at peace
"with me. From such blessed assurance I feel that in-
"ward joy, which this world can neither give, nor take
"from me. My conscience beareth me this witness; and
"this witness makes the thoughts of death joyful. I could
"wish to live, to do the Church more service; but cannot
"hope it: for my days are past, as a shadow that re-
"turns not."

His worthy biographer adds: "More he would have
"spoken, but his spirits failed him; and, after a short con-
"flict between nature and death, a quiet sigh put a period
"to his last breath, and so, he fell asleep—And now he
"seems to rest like Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Let me
"here draw his curtain, till, with the most glorious com-
"pany of the Patriarchs and Apostles, and the most noble
"army of Martyrs and Confessors, this most learned, most
"humble, most holy man, shall also awake to receive an
"eternal tranquillity, and with it a greater degree of glory,
"than common Christians shall be made partakers of."

Doctor Smith, when the hour of his departure hence shall arrive, will copy the example of the believer, or the

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infidel, as it liketh him best. I must freely own, I have no opinion of that reader's *head* or *heart*, who will not exclaim, as I find myself obliged to do—

"Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let *my* last "end be like his!"

I am, Sir,

Your very sincere well-wisher, and humble servant,

One of the People called CHRISTIANS.

POSTSCRIPT.

As it is possible, sir, nay, probable, that this little tract, because it is a little one, may be perused by many who have not leisure or inclination to go through large volumes, and yet wish to know what Mr. Hume's philosophical system is; I shall here subjoin a short but comprehensive summary of the doctrines which compose it, drawn up some few years ago, by a learned gentleman, for his amusement, with proper references to those parts of our philosopher's works, where such doctrines were to be found. And though I never heard the compiler had the thanks of Mr. Hume for so doing, yet neither could I ever find, that he or his friends disputed the fidelity and accuracy with which it was done[n].

[n] See Dr. Beattie's Essay on Truth, Part II. chap. i. sect. 1. and Part III. chap. ii.

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A Summary of Mr. Hume's Doctrines, Metaphysical and Moral.

OF THE SOUL.

That the soul of man is not the same this moment, that it was the last; that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things, and that it is nothing at all.

That in this soul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation; and yet that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cause of thought.

OF THE UNIVERSE.

That the external world does not exist, or at least, that its existence may reasonably be doubted.

That the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist.

That the universe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a substance.

That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause.

OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

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That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themselves, and therefore, the utmost that philosophy can do, is to give us a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts[o].

That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument, that by argument nothing can be proved.

That man, in all his perceptions, actions, and volitions, is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the existence of which he is by no means certain: and yet, that the nature of all things depend so much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the sun light, without an act of the human understanding.

OF GOD.

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good, while there is any evil or disorder in the universe.

That we have no good reason to think the universe proceeds from a cause.

That as the existence of the external world is questionable, we are at a loss to find arguments by which we may prove the existence of the Supreme Being, or any of his attributes.

That when we speak of power, as an attribute of any being, God himself not excepted, we use words without meaning.

That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being

[o] The fourth section of Mr. Hume's *Essays on the Human Understanding*, is called *Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the human understanding;* and the fifth section bears this title, *Sceptical solution of those doubts.*

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endued with power, *much less* of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reason to believe, that any object, or quality of any object exists, of which we cannot form an idea[p].

OF THE MORALITY OF HUMAN ACTIONS.

That every human action is necessary, and could not have been different from what it is.

That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are nearly of the same kind—In other words, that to want honesty, and to want understanding, and to want a leg, are equally the objects of moral disapprobation.

That adultery must be practised, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practised, it would in time cease to be scandalous; and that, if practised secretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all.

Lastly, as the soul of man, according to Mr. Hume, becomes every moment a different being, the consequence must be, that the crimes committed by him at one time, cannot be imputable to him at another[q].

I believe, Dr. Smith, the reader is now fully prepared to enter into the spirit of your concluding sentence, which therefore shall be mine.

[p] The poor prodigal Gentile, in the parable, was hardly reduced to feed upon such HUSKS as these. How good and how joyful a thing must it be, for one, that has been so reduced, to return to the house of his heavenly Father, where *there is bread enough and to spare—to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent!*

[q] "My *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* is of all my "writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably "the BEST." Life, p. 16.

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"I have always considered Mr. Hume, both in his life-
"time, and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the
"idea of a PERFECTLY WISE AND VIRTUOUS MAN, as perhaps
"the nature of human frailty will permit."

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PREFACE.

LET no reader take offence, though the subjects debated in the following pages be of a serious nature, if the ideas and images employed should sometimes border upon the ludicrous. The contest between Elijah and the votaries of Baal was a very serious one, and heaven itself interposed in its decision. Yet, strong and pointed is the *irony* of the prophet: "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talk-"ing, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradven-"ture he sleepeth, and must be awaked[a]!" Impiety provokes a frown; absurdity occasions a smile; and many who glory in the imputation of the former cannot but feel when they are convicted of the latter. Some opinions and arguments become risible, on being stated. A portrait is sufficient; a caricature needless; perhaps impossible. Where such is not the case, nothing, it is hoped, has met with this treatment, unless proved to deserve it. Ridicule is not the test of truth, because truth must always be the test of ridicule; and he, who laughs in the wrong place, exposes no character, except his own. But, as the learned and ingenious Dr. Ogilvie has well observed,

[a] 1 Kings, xviii. 27.

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"he who can fairly turn the laugh when it has been raised "against him, will be pardoned readily, provided he has "laughed in good humour[b]."

[b] Inquiry into the Causes of the Infidelity and Scepticism of the Times. Page 445.

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LETTERS ON INFIDELITY.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO W. S. ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

YOU express your surprise that, after the favourable manner in which the *Letter to Dr. Smith* was received by the public, and the service which, as you are pleased to say, was effected by it, nothing farther should have been attempted; especially as an *Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, Esq.* made its appearance soon afterwards; and some posthumous tracts of that philosopher have been since published to complete the good work he had so much at heart; not to mention other productions on the side of Infidelity. A few strictures on the nature and tendency, the principles and reasonings, of such performances, thrown out, from time to time, in a concise and lively way, you observe, are better calculated to suit the taste and turn of the present age, than long and elaborate dissertations; and you see no reason why a method practised by Voltaire (and so much commended by D'Alembert) *against* religion, should not be adopted by those who write *for* it. In compliance with these hints, and that you may not think me desirous of leading an idle life, when there is so much work to be done, I

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have formed a resolution to look over my papers, and address what I may happen to find among them to yourself in a series of letters; a species of composition much in vogue, and which has these two advantages to recommend it, that it admits of matter however miscellaneous, and may be continued or broken off at pleasure.

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LETTER I.

I BEGIN, dear sir, with a few observations on the *Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, Esq.* drawn up soon after that work came out, but reserved in expectation of Mr. Hume's posthumous tracts.

With difficulty I am able to persuade my friends, that this author and myself have not written in concert; for his Apology and my Letter fit each other like two tallies[a]. In his dedication, he expresses his apprehension, that "the CHRISTIAN clamour "would be raised afresh." A clamour is accordingly raised by "one of the people called CHRISTIANS." Elsewhere he intimates his expectation that Mr. Hume's "affectionate Dr. Smith" would come in for his share. A letter is accordingly written to that very doctor.

You see, dear sir, how I have done my best to fulfil his predictions. Let us now inquire, whether he may not have returned the favour, and been equally kind to me.

In my advertisement I ventured to suppose that, by a late publication, the admirers of Mr. Hume

[a] The apology was *written* before the publication of the Letter, though sent into the world after it.

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imagined religion to have received its *coup de grace*, and that the astonished public was utterly at a loss to conceive, "what they, who believed in God, "could possibly have to say for themselves." To convert my supposition into matter of fact, he opens his Apology with a kind of funeral oration, most solemnly pronounced over Christianity as a breathless corpse, about to be for ever interred in the grave of Mr. Hume.

"David Hume is dead! Never were the pillars of "Orthodoxy so desperately shaken, as they are now "by that event!" And, at p. 9, he speaks of the "particular circumstances of this event" as "increas-"ing the aggregate of our *consternation!*"

Here the distempered imagination of the apologist sees Mr. Hume, like another Samson, bowing himself with all his might between the *pillars*, and slaying more at his *death*, than all that he slew in his *life*. He sees the believing world aghast, the Church tottering from its foundations, and Christians *assembling in an upper chamber, with the doors shut, for fear of the philosophers*. What may be the state of religion upon earth, before the end shall come, we cannot tell. We have reason to think it will be very bad. But let us hope, notwithstanding all which has happened in Scotland, that the Gospel will last our time.

Thus, again: I scrupled not to assert, that the end proposed, in giving an account of Mr. Hume's life and death, was to recommend his sceptical and atheistical notions. Dr. Smith indeed was wary and modest. He gave us a detail of circumstances,

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and then only added, that, "as to his philosophy, "men would entertain various opinions, but, to be "sure, all must allow his conduct was unexception-"able," &c. But the apologist has blotted it all out at once—David Hume's life was *right*, and therefore his system cannot be *wrong*. My friend Dr. Smith will take him to task for this, as sure as he is alive.

And now for another piece of complaisance on *my* side. P. 9. He "wishes only out of curiosity to "know the unaffected state of our feelings," on perusing the account given by Dr. Smith. As if I had been privy to his thoughts, the wish was no sooner formed than gratified by my Letter, which communicated to him, and to the public, the *state of our feelings*, and in a manner, I do assure him, perfectly *unaffected*. But it is a difficult matter to please him; for now *he hath seen me, he doth not like me*.

At the close of the Address, he tells me that, "after "accurately examining my Letter, and carefully re-"considering the whole subject of the preceding "Apology, in consequence of it, he sees no occasion "to alter a single sentence." Let us therefore take a view of the Apology, which is pronounced to be unaffected by it.

Page 11. "It is less the design of these papers to "defend Hume's principles, than to show, upon the "best authority, that he *was earnest in what he* "*wrote;* and that, through every part of his life, "even to the very moment of his death, *he made pre-*"*cept and practice go hand in hand together*."

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But, surely, if the principles are not to be *defended;* if they are, as they have been represented, sceptical and atheistical; does the man, who propagated them during his life, and took the requisite measures that they should be propagated after his death—does such a man deserve commendation, because he was *in earnest?* An Apology of this kind may be offered in behalf of every felon executed at Tyburn, provided only that by dying hard, he *make precept and practice go hand in hand together.* And the apologist very judiciously observes as much.

Page 10. "Many, indeed, will think, that this, "however perspicuously proved, will be doing him "no real honour; since in proportion to the clear-"ness of the evidence upon this matter, it will only "show his impiety and obstinate infidelity the "plainer; thereby, in the end, incurring upon him "a more general disgrace."

Truly he has hit the mark. This is the very objection, which caused a friend of mine, on reading his book, to say, he should think it a less misfortune, to have the disgrace of hanging *incurred upon him,* than to have such an apologist. And yet, in the case before us, he had a reason for making this Apology, namely, that there was no other to be made. The only question is, whether it might not have been better, if he had said nothing, and suffered things to take their chance? However, it is now too late. The objection is fairly stated, and we all stand, *arrectis auribus,* in expectation of the answer. Lo, it comes:—

"I am of a different opinion. The terms infi-

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" delity, impiety, and atheism, should not be lavishly " trusted from the lip." Such a sentence (by the way) should not have been *lavishly trusted from the pen.* " We should not presume

" To deal damnation round the land
" On each we deem our foe."

Sir, your very humble servant. I most heartily wish you a good night. Here was the *jugulum causæ*, the precise point to be argued, over which I hoped to have had the honour of his good company for the evening; when, in the twinkling of an eye, he slips through my hands, like an eel, and is out of sight in the mud.

We are not about to *deal damnation* on any man. But are there not such things as infidelity, impiety, and atheism? And are not the writings of Mr. Hume justly chargeable with them? These are the question.

The apologist knows, as well as I do, that Mr. Hume's Essays contain arguments downright Epicurean against the being of a God. Some of them are mentioned in the *Summary*, at the end of the Letter to Dr. Smith, and no notice is taken of the matter. In the *Natural History of Religion*, Dr. Hurd thought our philosopher was approaching towards the *borders* of theism. But I never could find that he penetrated far into the *country*. These same arguments stand to this hour unretracted; the Essays, which contain them, are published and republished with the rest; whether, at the hour of

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death, he thought there was a God, or thought there was none, we have not a single hint given us; and concerning his posthumous papers[b], the apologist informs us, in his Dedication, "there is every reason "to believe they turn upon similar researches with "such as have been already printed; or, as it is "more likely, they may carry his philosophy still "nearer to THAT POINT, which he might not think "it DISCREET to *push too vigorously* in his life-time." New discoveries in irreligion then, it seems, still remain to be made. They, who have duly considered the *vigour* displayed by Mr. Hume in his life-time, are rather at a loss to conceive, what THAT POINT may be, to which, by posthumous efforts, his *philosophy* is to be *carried*. It must lie somewhere

Beyond the realms of Chaos and old Night!

Discretion is, undoubtedly, as Sir John Falstaff says, *the better part of valour;* but really, in these days of freedom, there is scarce a possibility of its ever being called for. Something, however, is to come, which the apologist supposes will occasion more CHRISTIAN *clamour*. When we are so severely *pinched*, he imagines we shall cry out. Certainly, it cannot be thought we are *lavish* of the terms infidelity, impiety, and atheism, when we apply them to such proceedings as these. What other terms can we apply, or would he himself wish us to apply? And he gravely apologizes for their au-

[b] These have since been published.

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thor, by telling us, he was *consistent*, he was *in earnest*, he *died* as he *lived*, and left blasphemies to be published after his death, which he dared not to publish while he was yet alive. Whom shall we most admire, the philosopher or his apologist?

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LETTER II.

Our Apologist observes, dear sir, p. 11, "What-"ever might be the force of Mr. Hume's *faith*, no "one, it is conjectured, will charge him with having "neglected *good works*. I do not pretend," adds he, "to say how far those *are*, or are *not* suf-"ficient."

Indeed, I believe there will be no absolute necessity, upon this occasion, of going deep into the controversy concerning *faith and works*. The character in which Mr. Hume principally appeared, and on which he chiefly valued himself, was that of an *author*. He passed his life in *writing;* the effects of his writings are visible in his worthy apologist, and many others; they are likely to go down to posterity. An unwearied endeavour to propagate the principles contained in those writings, is what we can never consent to dignify with the appellation of a *good work*. To worship, to love, and to serve God, oneself, is the first of good works; to teach and incite others to do the same, is the second. To renounce every thing of this kind, oneself, is the first of evil works; and the second is like unto it, to tempt and seduce others, that they may fall after the same example of unbelief. This is the employment of that person, whom the apologist mentions, as having joined with

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the *dancing-master*, and the *perfumer*, in compounding a system of manners, recommended by the late Earl of Chesterfield[c]. He might possibly divert himself in that way, at his leisure hours; but when he set to business in good earnest, the issue was, AN INQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

The apologist is fond of citing two lines, which have been often cited by others with a similar view.

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> "His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

The Christian faith, at its first appearance, endured the trial of ten persecutions, and triumphed over the wit, wisdom, and power of the whole Roman empire. Offered openly to the inspection and examination of the world, it has now stood its ground above seventeen hundred years. The apologist hardly expects it should at length fall before a couplet of Mr. Pope. Poets, he knows, are not upon oath; and *one for sense, and one for rhyme*, is often a fair composition. The verses rhyme well; but as to sense, that is another question. Their author somewhere tells us, that in reading religious controversy, he still found himself to agree with the last author he perused. One cannot therefore well take him for a guide in these matters. The bright sun of the morning fell from his exalted station in the heavens; and he, who penned MESSIAH, was afterwards unfortunately duped by the sophistry of Bolingbroke. "Evil "communications corrupt good manners."

[c] Page 112. "A system which seems to have been pillaged "from the dancing-master, the perfumer, and the devil."

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As to the verses in hand, I know not that they were designed to extend by any means so far, as, by the present application, the apologist means to extend them. If they were, the proposition contained in them will be this: that, provided a man discharge the relative and social offices, it matters not what deity he acknowledges and worships; or whether he acknowledge and worship any.

I am sorry I should be obliged to go back to a thing so vulgar and antiquated as my CATECHISM. But so it happens. I cannot forget that, when a boy, *I learned two things: my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.* And, from that day to this, it never entered into my head, that the performance of the *latter* would atone for the neglect of the *former.* Surely one might as well say, the performance of the *former* would atone for the breach of the *latter.* But the apologist will never allow one; and we cannot submit to allow the other. What! Shall we make a conscience of discharging our duty to men like ourselves, and none of discharging that to our Maker, our Redeemer, our God? Is it reckoned praise-worthy, generous, noble, great, and good, to love and celebrate an earthly parent or benefactor; and can it be deemed a point of indifference, whether we believe or deny, whether we bless or blaspheme our heavenly and eternal Father and Friend, who gives us life, and breath, and all things, in this world, and invites us to a far more happy and glorious state of existence in another? May we adore Jehovah, or Baal; the Creator of the universe, or a monkey, or matter,

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or chance, or nothing, as the whim takes us, and be blameless? Tell it not to believers; publish it not among the Christians!

The matter of fact is: that *life* cannot be *in the right*, which is spent in *doing wrong*. And if to question all the doctrines of religion, even to the providence and existence of a God, and to put morality on no other foot than that of UTILITY—if to do this be not to do *wrong*—then farewell all distinction between right and wrong for evermore. To maintain and diffuse the truth of God is to *do his will;* to deny, corrupt, or hinder it, is to *work iniquity;* and a life so employed is a *wicked life*—perhaps the *most* wicked that can be imagined. For what comparison is there between one who commits a crime of which he may repent, or, at worst, it may die with him; and one who, though he do not himself commit it, teaches and encourages all the world to commit it by removing out of the way the strongest sanctions and obligations to the contrary, in writings which may carry on the blessed work from generation to generation? Let not these errors be called errors of *speculation* only. Action flows from speculation. No man ventures upon sin, till he has, for the time at least, adopted some false principle. And "when men begin to look "about for arguments in vindication of impiety and "immorality, such speculations as those of Mr. "Hume become interesting, and can hardly fail of "a powerful and numerous patronage. The cor-"rupt judge; the prostituted courtier; the states-"man, who enriches himself by the plunder and

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"blood of his country; the pettifogger, who fat-
"tens on the spoils of the fatherless and widow,
"the oppressor, who, to pamper his own beastly
"appetite, abandons the deserving peasant to beg-
"gary and despair; the hypocrite, the debauchee,
"the gamester, the blasphemer—all prick up their
"ears, when they are told, that a celebrated author
"has written Essays, containing such doctrines, and
"leading to such consequences." Weighed against a conduct like this, the moralities of social life (a system of which, by the way, according to Mr. Hume, every man is left to compound for himself) are dust upon the balance; they are like the salutation of Joab, when he smote Amasa to the heart: "And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my "brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard "with the right hand, *to kiss him.* But Amasa took "no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand; "so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and "shed out his bowels to the ground[d]." In short, if faith in God be not the effect of superstition and imposture, which no man has yet proved it to be, we are bound to regard it as our most valuable possession, and to esteem those who would rob the world of it as the worst of thieves; however towards each other they may practise what the apologist styles the *duties,* the *decencies,* and the *charities*[e].

Page 12. "Perhaps it is one of the very worst "circumstances against Christianity, that very few of

[d] 2 Sam. xx. 9. [e] Page 13.

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"its professors were either so moral, so humane, "or could so philosophically govern their passions, "as the sceptical David Hume."

And yet, we do not every day hear of a *Christian* running round a counter with his drawn sword after a *reviewer;* or quitting a room on the entrance of his antagonist. It appears, from a variety of instances, that Mr. Hume, when his literary character was concerned, could by no means "govern "his passions so philosophically" as his apologist wishes to have it believed. But it is not my desire to depreciate any thing that might be really commendable in him. Thus much only I will venture to assert, that, whatever it was, the merit of it is not due to his philosophical principles. These afford no motives to restrain men, who have once embraced them, from any vices, to which their constitutions may happen to incline. It is too much for the same person to excel in every branch. It is enough if he point the way. All evil beings are not *immoral.* Lord Chesterfield's friend, himself, mentioned above, offends not in the articles of eating, wine, or women; he is differently employed. He is employed in tempting others to offend.

The apologist tells us, "Mr. Hume's most ab-"stract researches were in favour of a behaviour "perfectly irreproachable. Whoever is acquainted "with Mr. Hume's writings will bear witness, that "he was a lover of decency, order, and decorum. "It would be the drudgery of a day to detect a sin-"gle light sentence in Hume[f]."

[f] Page 106. 110.

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I shall transcribe two or three sentences, which lie pretty near together in a *Dialogue* subjoined to his *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals.*

"There is almost as great difficulty, I acknow-
"ledge, to justify French as *Greek gallantry;* ex-
"cept only, that the former is much more natural
"and agreeable than the latter. But our neigh-
"bours, it seems, have resolved to sacrifice some
"of the *domestic* to the *sociable* pleasures; and to
"prefer *ease, freedom,* and an open commerce, to
"a strict fidelity and constancy. *These ends are*
"*both good,* and are sometimes difficult to recon-
"cile; nor need we be surprised, if the customs of
"nations incline too much sometimes to the one
"side, and sometimes to the other[g]. It is need-
"less to dissemble: the consequence of a very free
"commerce between the sexes, and of their living
"much together, will often terminate in intrigues
"and gallantry. We must sacrifice somewhat of
"the *useful,* if we be very anxious to obtain all the
"*agreeable* qualities; and cannot pretend to reach
"alike *every kind of advantage.* Instances of li-
"cence, daily multiplying, will weaken the scandal
"with the one sex, and teach the other by degrees
"to adopt the famous maxim of la Fontaine with
"regard to female infidelity, *that, if one knows it,*
"*it is but a small matter; if one knows it not, it is*
"*nothing*[h]." Verily, as Lord Foppington says to his brother in the stage-play, A NICE MARALITY, TAM, STAP MY VITALS!

[g] Essays, vol. ii. p. 397. edit. 1772. [h] Essays, vol. ii. p. 402.

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When we consider these sentences as proceeding from the pen of "the first philosopher of the age," in his palmary and capital work, designed to settle the principles of morality on their only proper foundation, "it would be the drudgery of a MONTH" to find any thing in the system of Chesterfield and his three associates, "the dancing-master, the per-"fumer, and the devil," better calculated to multiply new *connexions*, and dissolve old ones; any thing that so much deserves the profoundest acknowledgements from—the gentlemen of DOCTORS' COMMONS.

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LETTER III.

It may still perhaps be asked, dear sir, how it should happen, that, when Mr. Hume's principles were so bad, his practices should be no worse? Let me offer the solution given of such a phenomenon in the intellectual world, by a very ingenious and sagacious writer, who had not only studied mankind in general, but, as it should seem, had bestowed some pains upon the very case now before us.

"This fact has been regarded as unaccountable: "that sober men, of morals apparently unblameable, "should madly unhinge the great principles of re-"ligion and society, without any visible motive or "advantage. But by looking a little farther into "human nature, we shall easily resolve this seeming "paradox. These writers are generally men of "speculation and industry; and therefore, though "they give themselves up to the dictates of their "ruling passion, yet that ruling passion commonly "leads to the tract of abstemious manners. That "desire of distinction and superiority, so natural to "man, breaks out into a thousand various and fan-"tastic shapes; and in each of these, according as it "is directed, becomes a virtue or a vice. In times "of luxury and dissipation therefore, when every

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"tenet of irreligion is greedily embraced, what road "to present applause can lie so open and secure, as "that of disgracing religious belief? Especially if "the writer help forward the vices of the times, by "relaxing *morals*, as well as destroying *principle*. "Such a writer can have little else to do, but to "new model the paradoxes of ancient scepticism, in "order to figure it in the world, and be regarded, "by the smatterers in literature and adepts in folly, "as a prodigy of parts and learning. Thus his "vanity becomes deeply criminal, and is execrated "by the wise and good; because it is gratified at "the expense of his country's welfare. But the "consolation which degenerate manners receive "from his fatal tenets, is repaid by eager praise: and "vice impatiently drinks in and applauds his hoarse "and boding voice, while, like a raven, he sits croak-"ing universal death, despair, and annihilation to "the humankind."

But taking the account of Mr. Hume's manners as his friends have given it; to say, that "few of "the professors of Christianity ever equalled him "in morality, humanity, and the government of "their passions," is certainly going a great deal too far. Thousands, in the first ages of the Gospel, gave all their goods to feed the poor; renounced, in deed as well as word, the world and the flesh, and joyfully met death in its most horrid forms, for the love of their Redeemer. On the same principle, unnumbered multitudes, in every succeeding age, have manfully sustained the heaviest calamities of human life, and with faith unfeigned, and hope that

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maketh not ashamed, yielded up their souls into the hands of their Creator. Scenes of this kind are daily and hourly passing in the chambers of the sick and dying, as they, whose office it is to visit those chambers, well know. To others they must remain unknown, for want of biographers to record them. Every Christian, who lives in piety and charity, does not favour the public with HIS OWN LIFE. Every Christian, who expires in peace and hope, has not the happiness of a Dr. Smith to pen the story of his death:

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> "The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> "Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
> "And waste its sweetness in the desert air.
>
> "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
> "Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
> "Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
> "They kept the noiseless tenour of their way."

"Christianity," says a learned writer, "has in every "age produced good effects on thousands and ten "thousands, whose lives are not recorded in history; "which is, for the most part, a register of the vices, "the follies, and the quarrels of those who made a "figure and a noise in the world; insomuch that "Socrates, at the close of his work, observes, that "if men were honest and peaceable, historians "would be undone for want of materials."

But, whether the professors of a religion be many, or few; whether they be influenced by the spirit of

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it, or not; whether they be sincere, or hypocrites; whether they be detected, or undetected; the religion is still the same: it does not change with the changing tempers, dispositions, and interests of mankind, in different times and places; nor is it to be charged with the guilt of practices, against which it protests in every page. No demonstration in Euclid can be clearer than this.

To account for the opposition often so visible between the lives and opinions of Christians, one must enumerate all the various methods, by which, in matters of moral and spiritual concern, men are wont to impose upon themselves. Appetite and passion, sloth and interest, will work wonders in this way—wonders, of which he has no idea, who has not been accustomed, with this view, to contemplate the conduct of those around him, and impartially to scrutinize his own. The religion of many a person professing Christianity, is, by these means, laid by, like a best coat, for Sundays and holidays. Not a single thought occurs of the necessity there is for its being brought into the daily and hourly concerns of common life. It is a speculative belief, deposited in the understanding, to which its owner recurs when he has nothing else to do; he finds it where he left it, and is fully satisfied with its being there, instead of bearing it always about him, in his heart and affections, as an active principle, ready for use, to operate at all seasons and on all occasions. He will even spend his days in discoursing and disputing upon the sublimest doctrines and most holy precepts of religion, his own life still

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continuing unreformed. Nay, what is yet more strange, he will preach seriously, earnestly, affectionately, and repeatedly, against a failing, to which he himself is notoriously subject, and every one who hears him knows him to be so. It follows not necessarily, that he is designedly playing the hypocrite and acting a part. He has some method of concealing himself from himself, or of excusing himself to himself. He does not *see* that he is the person, against whom all his own arguments are pointed. He does not *think* of it. He stands in need of a friend, or an enemy, to tell him, THOU ART THE MAN. This may seem to be a species of madness; but this is human nature. Let me conclude with a story.

A friend of mine was much afflicted with a dangerous disorder, part hereditary, and part the fruit of his own industry. He sent for one of the best physicians in the kingdom, who, having discoursed, greatly to his satisfaction, on the excellency of medicine in general, and of a medicine proper for that disorder in particular, wrote his prescription, and took his leave. My friend, who was a scholar, had a learned gentleman with him at the time; and the doctor was hardly out of the door, before a very warm controversy began between them, concerning the *style* of the prescription, whether it were *classical* or not. This and the virtues of the medicine were now the constant subjects of my friend's conversation, and he inveighed with great zeal and indignation, against the folly of those, who would languish under disease, when there was such a remedy

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to be had. The distemper, mean while, increased upon himself, and began to seize the vitals. The doctor was again sent for; and knowing his patient to be a remarkably ABSENT man, Pray, sir, said he, give me leave to ask you one question: Have you TAKEN the medicine? A summons to the bar of judgement could hardly have astonished my friend more than this question. He awoke as one out of a dream, and very honestly owned, he had been so occupied in talking and writing about it, and recommending it to others, that he had really quite forgotten that part of the prescription. He did indeed recollect to have once tasted the draught, but finding it rather bitter, a flavour always disagreeable to him, he had set it by again, trusting, it seems, for his cure, to the virtues which might escape the cork, as it stood upon the mantel-piece. You see how easy it is for him who possesses the medicine, to be like him who possesses it not; the medicine itself continuing all the while perfectly irreproachable.

And now, if you please, dear sir, we will take our leave of the Apology; for I have no design to meddle with the farrago of *extraneous* matter which it contains, respecting *gallantry*, *flattery*, *dedications*, *&c. &c. &c.* and as to the crude and angry remarks at the end of it, on the Letter to Dr. Smith, *valeant quantum valere possunt!* I will trust any man with them, if, during the perusal, he will only hold in his hand the pamphlet to which they relate. The Apology is indeed, both for matter and manner, sentiment and language, so mean and wretched

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a performance, that one cannot sufficiently wonder, how any person, accustomed to write, could permit such a piece to come abroad with all its imperfections on its head. I have selected those parts which afforded room for enlarging on topics useful to be discussed, and have now done with it for ever.

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LETTER IV.

I AM truly concerned, dear sir, to hear that your old constitutional complaint, a depression of spirits, has of late been more than usually troublesome; and wish I may succeed in the medicine I am going to administer, if not for the removal, at least for a temporary alleviation of it.

The famous Dr. Radcliffe was once called in to a person almost suffocated by an imposthumated swelling in the throat. The case required immediate relief, and the doctor sent his servant into the kitchen, to order and bring up a large hasty-pudding. Upon its arrival, falling into a violent passion because it was not made to his mind, he flung a handful of it in the fellow's face, who returned the compliment, and an engagement ensued between them till the ammunition was all spent. The sick man, who had been raised in his bed to see the battle, was forced into a violent fit of laughter; the imposthume broke, and the patient recovered.

In the present case, the philosophy contained in Mr. Hume's posthumous work, styled *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, shall be our hasty-pudding; and I will introduce a couple of gentlemen of my acquaintance to toss a little of it backwards and for-

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wards, for your entertainment. May the effect prove equally salutary!

A Dialogue between Thomas and Timothy on Philosophical Scepticism.

TIM. Whither away so fast, man? Where art going this morning?

TOM. I am going to be made a Christian.

TIM. The very last thing I should have dreamed of. But pray, who is to make you one?

TOM. David Hume.

TIM. David Hume! Why, I thought he was an Atheist.

TOM. The world never was more mistaken about any one man, than about David Hume. He was deemed a sworn foe to Christianity, whereas his whole life was spent in its service. His works compose altogether a complete *Præparatio Evangelica.* They lead men gently, and gradually, as it were, to the Gospel.

TIM. As how, TOM? Be pleased to take me along with you.

TOM. Why, look you, here is chapter and verse for you. *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,* p. 263. "To be a *philosophical sceptic,* is, in a man "of letters, the first and most essential step towards "being a *sound believing Christian.*"

TIM. When David was at Paris, I have heard

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the wits there should say he was a very worthy gentleman, but had his religious prejudices, like other people. As folks are quick scented in that country, perhaps they smelled a rat. Indeed, in a *Supplement to the Life of Mr. Hume*, we are told, that a brother of his used to observe of him, "My bro-"ther Davy is a good enough sort of a man, but "*rather narrow-minded.*" Well, I cannot tell what to say to it; there are abundance of pretty fancies stirring. I suppose there may be different ways of becoming a Christian. A *man of letters* enters, belike, at the back door, and so goes round the house to come at it; a compass which we plain folk do not think it necessary to take. One thing is certain, that if scepticism be the road to Christianity, Mr. Hume is a very proper person to keep the turnpike gate upon it. But what progress must one make, if one had a mind to try the experiment, in this same *philosophical scepticism*, before one could become a good *sound believing Christian?* Must one doubt of every thing?

Tom. Of every thing in this world, and that which is to come; as I myself do at this present speaking. It is the most agreeable process in life; a charming delightful suspense of judgement. I doubt whether there be any such thing as matter; I doubt likewise whether there be any such thing as spirit: that is, I doubt whether there be creature or Creator; and whether I myself am any thing more than a bundle of perceptions, without either body or soul. We modern philosophers, you must know, consider matter and spirit as so much lum-

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ber, which should be cleared out of the way. There would then be a noble field open for speculation, and we might all set out afresh. I doubt, whether the world (supposing, for a moment, that there be one), did not exist from eternity, or whether it did not make itself; whether it be not a huge animal, somewhat like an ostrich, which lays now and then an egg to be hatched into a young world; or whether it be not an overgrown vegetable run to seed. "As a tree sheds its seed into the neighbouring "fields, and produces other trees, so the great vegetable, the world, or this planetary system, produces, perhaps, within itself certain seeds, which "being scattered into the surrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. A comet, for instance, is "the seed of a world; and after it has been fully "ripened, by passing from sun to sun, and star to "star, is at last tossed into the unformed elements "which every where surround this universe, and "immediately sprouts up into a new system[i]."

TIM. Vastly ingenious! and really, upon the whole, not improbable! But prithee, TOM, if you are not in too great a hurry to be made a Christian, do stop for half an hour, and instruct me a little farther in this *New Week's Preparation* of Mr. Hume. For the specimen you have given me is so exquisite, that it perfectly makes my mouth to water for more. What is the plan of these famous *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion?*

TOM. You shall have it in few words: Once

[i] Dialogues, p. 132.

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upon a time, then, there was a promising young man, whose name was Pamphilus. He was brought up by a philosopher called Cleanthes. Philo, a brother philosopher, came to spend some days with Cleanthes. The Dialogues are supposed to contain the substance of a conversation which passed between these personages, by way, among other things, of preparing young Pamphilus, in a proper manner, for the reception of the Gospel, by first making him a thorough sceptic. Pamphilus, who, as a hearer only, was to learn and be wise, relates this conversation, in a letter to his friend Hermippus. There is a third speaker in the Dialogues, styled Demea, one of your old fashioned orthodox gentry, who both firmly believes the existence of a Deity, and is rather disposed to speak well than ill of his Maker. But the two philosophers so astonish and discompose him, draw him into so many ambuscades, and raise so thick a metaphysical dust around him, that, at the close of the eleventh Dialogue, the old gentleman is glad to take a French leave; and vanishes so very suddenly, that whether he went out at the door, or the window, or up the chimney, no body knows to this hour. It would do your heart good to see the fun they make with him.

Tim. Before you go any farther, let me just ask you one question. Pray, do you act upon this principle of philosophical scepticism in common life?

Tom. O, by no means. If we did, we should walk into a horsepond, or run our heads against a wall, and the boys would laugh at us. No, no, "to

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"whatever length any one may push his speculative "principles of scepticism, he must act, and live, "and converse like other men; and for this con-"duct he is not obliged to give any other reason, "than the absolute necessity he lies under of so "doing[k]."

TIM. I think it would be hard upon him, if he were obliged to give any other reason; for *absolute necessity* is an exceeding good one. But what, then, is it you are all about, spending your pains in constructing a system, which you are necessitated to contradict and protest against, every time you go down a ladder, or get over a stile? Surely you ought to be set in a corner, with fools' caps upon your heads, like the misses at a boarding-school. In the name of common sense, what can you mean?

TOM. It is an amusement: "If a person carries "his speculations farther than this necessity con-"strains him, and philosophizes either on natural "or moral subjects, he is allured by a certain plea-"sure and satisfaction, which he finds in employing "himself after that manner[l]."

TIM. Suppose he were to play at push-pin, or span-farthing, would it not be more to the purpose? And then he would not disturb his neighbours. But that man's heart must be as wrong as his head, who can "find a certain pleasure and satisfaction" in endeavouring to persuade his fellow rationals, that they are without God in the world. However, if amusement be the word, let us believers have some too.

[k] Dialogues, p. 24. [l] Ibid.

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If philosophers will amuse themselves with talking nonsense, they must give us leave to amuse ourselves by laughing at it. On our side of the question it is possible to be *merry and wise*, as well as to do some little service to the world, by showing it what stuff these dreams are made of. Come, Tom, you shall represent the genius of philosophical scepticism. And now let us hear some of those strong reasons which induce you to deny the existence of a Deity.

Tom. Bless us! you shock me! I do not mean to deny the being, but only to philosophize a little concerning the nature of God[m].

Tim. Well, then, be it so. Philosophize away.

Tom. Our reason, Tim, is very weak, very weak; indeed, we are poor, finite, frail, blind creatures. Our knowledge of the things around us is extremely limited and imperfect: we ought to humble ourselves—[n].

Tim. There is always mischief in the wind, when a philosopher *falleth down and humbleth himself*. But what is your inference from all these lowly considerations?

Tom. That it is presumption in such worms of the dust to argue about the nature and attributes of God.

Tim. But you will allow poor reason to exercise herself in her own province; and, when she is furnished with premises, to draw a conclusion.

Tom. Ay, ay, there is no harm in that.

Tim. When we see a house calculated to answer

[m] Dialogues, p. 42. [n] Ibid.

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various purposes of beauty and convenience, and having in it all the marks of wisdom and design, we know it could not build itself. The senseless materials could never have prepared and arranged themselves in such order. The timber could not dance, cut and squared, out of the forest, nor the marble meet it, hewn and polished, from the quarry. The house therefore must have had a builder. We apply the same argument, *a fortiori*, to the case of the world, and its Maker, God; and Tully, if I remember right, makes no scruple to assert, that he who denies his assent to it does not deserve the name of a man. This is the argument called *a posteriori*, and lies open to the common sense of all mankind. Now, then, let us try the sincerity of that declaration of yours, that "the question is not con-"cerning the being, but the nature of God." For if you controvert this argument, you certainly mean to shake our belief in the existence of a Deity. You must of course attempt to show, that the world might have been as it is, without one; and, if that be the case, you will next defy us to prove that there is one.

Tom. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.* I must stick to truth, let what will come of it. I am not bound to answer for consequences. I must own I look upon the argument to be inconclusive.

Tim. All very well; but why could not you say so at first? What occasion to be mealy-mouthed in an age like this? Now matters are in a train, and we can proceed regularly. What is your objection to the argument? Wherein does it fail?

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Tom. It will fail, d'ye see, if there be not an exact similarity in the cases. You will not say, that there is an exact similitude between the universe and a house, or between God and man[o].

Tim Why, really, Tom, I never imagined the world had a door and a chimney, like a house; or that God had hands and feet like a man. Nor is it at all necessary that it should be so, for the strength and validity of the argument, which is plainly and simply this: If stones and trees have not thought and design to form themselves into a house, there must have been some one, who had thought and design, to do it for them; and so, as I said before, *a fortiori*, with respect to the universe, where the thought and design appear infinitely superior to those required in building a house. We have no occasion to suppose a resemblance of the universe to a house, or of God to man, in every particular.

Tom. "But why select so minute, so weak, so "bounded a principle, as the reason and design of "animals is found to be upon this planet? What "peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the "brain which we call thought, that we must thus "make it the model of the whole universe? Our "partiality in our own favour does indeed present it "upon all occasions; but sound philosophy ought "carefully to guard against so natural an illusion[p]."

Tim. It is not "our partiality in our own favour "that presents it to us upon all occasions," but the necessity of the case. There is no other way of

[o] Dialogues, p. 50, 51, 58. [p] Ibid. p. 60.

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speaking upon the subject, so as to be understood. Knowledge in God and man, however different in degree, or attained in a different manner, is the same in kind, and produces the same effects, so far as relates to our present purpose. The knowledge of God is intuitive and perfect; that of man is by deduction, and is therefore imperfect, either when his premises are false, or when passion and prejudice enter into his conclusion. But wisdom, which consists in fixing upon proper ends, and fitly proportioning means to those ends, is wisdom, in whatsoever object, mode, or degree, it may exist; and there is therefore no illusion, in saying, "every "house is builded by some man, but he that built "all things is God." You speak of thought, reason, or design, as "a little agitation of the brain;" as if you imagined, that *Paradise Lost*, or the *Advancement of Learning*, might at any time be produced by simmering a man's brains over the fire. Certainly an author cannot compose without brains, heart, liver, and lungs; but I am of opinion something more than all four must have gone to the composition even of the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. "Minute, weak, and bounded, as this "principle of reason and design is found to be in "the inhabitants of this planet," it can form and frustrate mighty schemes; it can raise and subvert empires; it can invent and bring to perfection a variety of arts and sciences; and in the hands of some very worthy gentlemen of my acquaintance, it can set itself up against all that is called God, and revile

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the works of the Almighty through three hundred and sixty-four pages together.

Tom. I cannot but still think there is something of partiality and self-love in the business. "Suppose "there were a planet wholly inhabited by spiders "(which is very possible), they would probably as-"sert, with the Bramins, that the world arose from "an infinite spider, who spun this whole compli-"cated mass from his bowels, and annihilates after-"wards the whole, or any part of it, by absorbing it "again, and resolving it into his own essence. This "inference would there appear as natural and irre-"fragable as that which in our planet ascribes the "origin of all things to design and intelligence. To "us indeed it appears ridiculous, because a spider is "a little contemptible animal, whose operations we "are never likely to take for a model of the whole "universe[q]."

Tim. Possibly not; but I should take that "lit-"tle contemptible animal" for an exact model of a sceptical philosopher:

> "It spins a flimsy web, its slender store;
> "And labours till it clouds itself all o'er."

And were there a planet wholly inhabited by these same philosophers, I doubt not of their spinning a cosmogony worthy an academy of spiders. And so, Tom, the *voluntary humility*, which discovered itself at your setting out, ends at last in degrading man to a spider; and reason is either exalted to the

[q] Dialogues, p. 142.

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stars, or depressed to the earth, as best serves the cause of infidelity. In this particular, however, you are at least as bad as the parsons[r]. But let us proceed. What have you more to say against the argument of the *house*?

Tom. I say that arguments concerning facts are founded on *experience*. I have seen one house planned and erected by an architect, and therefore I conclude the same with regard to others. But "will any man tell me, with a serious countenance, "that an orderly universe must arise from some "thought and art like the human, because we have "experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it "were requisite that we had experience of the origin "of worlds[s]."

Tim. Truly I know not how that can well be; for worlds are not made every day. I have heard of the production of none since our own, and man could not see that made, because he himself was made after it; and he could not exist before he was made. The contrary supposition was indeed once ventured on by the master of a Dutch puppet-show. Whether he were a metaphysician I never heard. In the beginning of this ingenious drama, Mr. Punch posting over the stage in a very large pair of jack-boots, and being asked whither he was going at so early an hour, replies, *I am going to be created*. His evidence, if you can procure it, is very much at the service of scepticism, and may go near to determine the matter. In the mean time, I

[r] Dialogues, p. 37. [s] Ibid. p. 66.

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shall presume my argument to be still good, that, if a house must be built by thought and design, a world cannot have been built without; though I have seen the one, and never was so fortunate as to see the other. Let me add farther, that if in the general contrivance and construction of the world there be evident demonstration of consummate wisdom, that demonstration cannot be set aside by seeming or real inconveniences in some parts, which, for good reasons, were either originally designed, or may have been since introduced, for the trial or punishment of its inhabitants, or for other purposes, unknown to us. This is the plain conclusion formed by common sense, and surely ten times more rational than to talk of *eggs*, and *seeds*, and *spiders*, and the necessity of *seeing* the world made, in order to know that it had a maker.

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LETTER V.

I SHALL not pursue any farther, at present, the wild ramblings of the spirit of scepticism in the *Dialogues on Natural Religion.* If your disorder should return hereafter, dear sir, we may take another handful or two of the hasty-pudding. Let us advert in the mean time to something more mischievous than the *Dialogues*, because more intelligible to the generality of readers, I mean an *Essay on Suicide*, in which that practice is vindicated, and recommended to his Majesty's liege subjects, not only as lawful and innocent, but as containing and comprehending, in many cases, almost the whole duty of man.

The Essay opens with a panegyric on philosophy as the only remedy for superstition. But may not the remedy prove worse than the disease? A young gentleman, some years ago, suffered himself to be seduced to popery. His friends sent him to the sage of Ferney for a cure; and a most effectual one indeed was wrought. He came home a confirmed infidel, and has employed himself ever since in writing against Christianity. Popery may be bad; but irreligion is not better.

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Pag. 1. Mr. Hume laments that "men endowed with the strongest capacity for business and affairs, crouch all their lives under slavery to the grossest superstition."

Superstition surely is not the failing of the present age in Great Britain. We have reason to wish there was a little more of it than there is; since by "the grossest superstition," philosophers often mean neither more nor less than the Christian religion.

Pag. 2. "The fair sex feel many of their joys blasted by this importunate intruder."

And lo, Mr. Hume, in his panoply of "sound philosophy," sallies forth as their champion, to slay the giant, and deliver the captive damsels. But of what kind are the female "joys" here alluded to? Innocent ones are heightened by religion, and those that are otherwise ought to be "blasted." Mr. Hume, we have been told, delighted much in the company of women that were modest, though the system of morals, with which he favoured the world, was by no means calculated to make or to keep them such. If they were edified by his conversation, I am heartily glad of it: "I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Ibid. "Superstition being founded on false opinion must immediately vanish, when true philosophy has inspired juster sentiments of superior powers."

But where is this same "inspiring true philosophy" to be found? In the writings of the ancient heathens? Assuredly not. They were not agreed whether there were many Gods, one God, or no

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God. In the writings of Mr. Hume? Alas! his famous Dialogues on Natural Religion show that, by studying their works, he had brought himself, and wished to bring his readers, into the very same uncertainty. "Just sentiments of superior powers" can be "inspired" only by those powers. From the apostasy of the nations to the coming of Christ, philosophy laboured at the task in vain; and if she has succeeded in any respect better since, it is because she has borrowed light from Revelation, and not been honest enough to own it. Christianity is founded not upon "false opinions," but facts, the truth of which all Mr. Hume's philosophy has never been able to disprove.

Pag. 3. To the direful effects of superstition enumerated by Cicero, Mr. Hume adds one still more direful; that a man under its dominion, "though "death alone can put a full period to his misery, "dares not fly to this refuge, but still prolongs a "miserable existence, from a vain fear lest he offend "his Maker by using the power with which that be-"neficent Being has endowed him. The presents "of God and nature are ravished from us by this-"cruel enemy, and notwithstanding that one step "would remove us from the regions of pain and "sorrow, her menaces still chain him down to a "hated being, which she herself chiefly contributes "to render miserable."

The superstition intended by Cicero is pagan superstition. But what is that superstition which in these times is understood to prohibit suicide? Evidently it is the Christian religion. It is this there-

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fore which by Mr. Hume is called "the modern "European superstition[t]." This is the "virulent "poison[u]," the "cruel enemy[x]," the "inhuman ty-"rant[y]," that "chiefly contributes to render life "miserable;" and the Deity is complimented by him as a "beneficent Being," because he has "en-"dowed a man with power" to cut his throat, or blow out his brains, in order to escape. The same beneficent Being has endowed a man with "power" (if that be all which is wanted) to cut the throat or blow out the brains of his neighbour, should he judge that neighbour to be the cause of his misery. Upon the principles advanced by Mr. Hume, it is no easy matter to give a good and sufficient reason why he should not do so. For if he has a right to kill himself when any great evil befalls him, or when he is under the apprehension of it, why may he not have an equal right to kill another, who, as he apprehends, has brought evil upon him, or who, as he fears, will do it? So, again: if he may kill himself because he seems no longer of any use to society, why not, out of charity, kill another, whom he finds or fancies to be in the same predicament? If such be Mr. Hume's philosophy, the Lord defend us from it, and bless us with a little common sense, and common honesty!

Pag. 5. Mr. Hume undertakes to prove that suicide is no breach of our duty to God: and now let us attend to him.

"In order to govern the material world, the Al-

[t] Pag. 5. [u] Pag. 2. [x] Pag. 4. [y] Pag. 5.

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" mighty Creator has established general and immu-
" table laws, by which all bodies are maintained in
" their proper sphere and function."

Without doubt he has established an agency of second causes, which we call the course of nature, operating, under his own superintendency, regularly and uniformly, unless when, for special reasons, he sees fit to alter or suspend it, as on many occasions he has done. Very well; now to proceed:

" To govern the animal world, he has endowed
" all living creatures with bodily and mental powers;
" with senses, passions, appetites, memory, and judge-
" ment, by which they are impelled or regulated in
" that course of life to which they are destined."

Here we must stop a little. And first, we will dismiss the other " animals" from their attendance, because the question proceeds solely upon man. This done, we ask, whether there be really no difference between the two cases; whether man be not endowed with a will to choose and refuse; and whether he be not accountable for his actions? If not; if he be necessarily " impelled and regulated in
" his course," as a planet in that marked out for it, by " general and immutable laws," there is at once an end of the morality of human actions, and neither suicide nor any thing else can be a crime. You will judge from what follows, how far it is Mr. Hume's intention to inculcate this idea.

Pag. 7. " All events, in one sense, may be pro-
" nounced the action of the Almighty; they all pro-
" ceed from those powers with which he has endowed
" his creatures."

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The murder of Abel "proceeded from those "powers with which God had endowed his crea-"ture" Cain; since if Cain had not possessed such powers, he could not have exerted them. But what is the "one sense," in which "that event may be "pronounced the action of the Almighty?" The power is from God, but let man be answerable for the use and abuse of it.

Pag. 7. "When the passions play, when the "judgement dictates, when the limbs obey, this is all "the operation of God."

The same fallacy. That the passions can play, the judgement can dictate, and the limbs can obey, is of God; but that these several faculties operate by righteousness unto life, and not by sin unto death, man, assisted by divine grace, is competent to provide; and it is at his peril that he do provide. Otherwise, God is made the author of all the evil in the world.

Pag. 8. "Men are intrusted to their own judge-"ment and discretion, and may employ every facul-"ty with which they are endowed to provide for their "ease, happiness, or preservation—"

In subordination to the laws of God, and the duties he has enjoined; not *per fas atque nefas*. There are cases in which we ought to give up our own ease, happiness, and even preservation, for the benefit of others, our friends, our country, our religion; and we shall in no wise lose our reward.

Pag. 9. We are now coming to the point.

"What is the meaning then of this principle, that "a man, who puts an end to his own life to avoid

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"pain and misery, has incurred the indignation of "his Creator by encroaching on the office of divine "providence, and disturbing the order of the uni-"verse?"

Mr. Hume has been careful to insinuate repeatedly in the course of his argument, "that the pro-"vidence of the Deity appears not *immediately* in "any operation, but governs every thing by the ge-"neral and immutable laws above mentioned[z]; that "there is no event exempted from them, or pecu-"liarly reserved for his own *immediate* action and "operation[a]; and that if general laws be ever "broken by particular volitions of the Deity, it is "after a manner which entirely escapes human "observation[b]." But God may act *mediately*, though not *immediately*; he may *direct*, though he does not *control*. The agency of second causes proceeds not by chance, or a blind impulse; it was created by God's power, framed by his wisdom, and is guided by his providence. We have better authority for affirming, than Mr. Hume can have for affirming the contrary, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our heavenly Father. If he regards the life of a bird, he cannot be indifferent to that of a man. The inference is made by the same authority, "how much *more*, O ye of little faith," quite contrary to another favourite position of Mr. Hume, that in the sight of God "every event is "alike important[c]; and that the life of a man is of

[z] Pag. 7. [a] Pag. 8. [b] Ibid. [c] Ibid.

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"no greater importance to the universe than that of "an oyster[d]."

If God be not inattentive to inferior animals, it must be because he had some view in giving them existence. And shall we suppose that man, the noblest of his creatures, the lord of this lower world, was formed without any view or design at all? No, surely; he is sent upon earth, for a certain time, to perform a certain part, to act, or to suffer, as God for wise and just reasons shall be pleased to ordain, till the part shall be finished, and he shall be released and dismissed by the same hand. The Lord of nature gives, and takes away. It is the glory of a man to resign himself to the Divine dispensations, and to wait his discharge in faith and patience. There is something more rational and manly and comfortable in all this, than in the notion of our being subjected only to the "general laws of matter and mo-"tion," and whenever we happen to be out of humour with the world and ourselves, flying at once for relief to the sword or the pistol. But in this case says Mr. Hume,

Page 11. It would be equally criminal "to act "for the preservation of life, as for its destruction."

By no means. God has implanted in every creature an instinct for the preservation of life, and great pains must be taken to overcome that instinct before we can bring ourselves to effect its destruction.

The reason assigned is, that in one case, as well

[d] Page 11.

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as the other, "we disturb the course of nature, and "infringe the general laws of matter and motion."

My dear philosopher, let us obey the law of God, and leave the laws of matter and motion to themselves. I am afraid it is impossible you should have imposed upon your own understanding, when you risked this argument.

Page 12. "A hair, a fly, an insect, is able to de-"stroy this mighty being, whose life is of such im-"portance."—Undoubtedly: now for the inference. "Is it an absurdity to suppose that *human prudence* "may *lawfully dispose* of what depends on such in-"significant causes?"

But is life of less importance while it continues, because by insignificant causes it may be taken away? Or because it may be so taken away, are we therefore authorized to extinguish it by our own act and deed? The consideration of its frailty can only render it more precious, inciting us to make the best use of it while we have it, and to take all possible care lest we lose it.

Page 12. "It would be no crime in me to divert "the Nile or Danube from its course."

None at all. Some opposition might arise from the inhabitants of certain countries perhaps, when they found they were likely to lose their rivers. But I wish you had been so employed, instead of writing essays in defence of suicide.

Page 12. "Where then is the crime of turning a "few ounces of blood from their natural channel?"

The public prints informed us some time ago of a man who killed his wife and children, as well as

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himself, to prevent them from being unhappy. And where was the crime? It was only "turning so many "more ounces of blood from their natural channel." This, it seems, is the *philosophical* idea of murder, somewhat similar to the notion once entertained of perjury by an Irish evidence: "Who would not "*smack the calveskin*," said he, "for a friend?"

But more curiosities await us. We are now to be informed, that resignation and gratitude are with the suicide; and that it belongs to the poor foolish Christian only to murmur and be thankless.

Page 12. "Do you imagine that I repine at Pro-"vidence, or curse my creation, because I go out of "life, and put a period to a being, which, were it to "continue, would render me miserable?"

I do really imagine, from all that I have observed and heard, that this is the disposition of mind in which many of those leave the world, who become their own executioners. Suicide is the refuge most frequently recurred to by pride, lust, and ambition, when disappointed in their schemes, or reduced to beggary by their own folly and extravagance. Sour, gloomy, and desperate, they put themselves upon the forlorn hope of atheism and annihilation, dash from the world, and plunge into eternity at a venture. Melancholy, if it proceed from the above-mentioned causes, partakes of their criminality. If it be constitutional, it is a disease, and must be judged of accordingly. As to the supposed instances of suicide committed to escape from pain and sickness, they very seldom happen. In

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that school of affliction men learn patience, and with patience many other good lessons. But from whatever cause such a resolution may proceed, he who throws back his life, the gift of God, in the face of the donor, and, in effect, says he will have no more of it, most certainly "repines at Providence," and cannot be far from "cursing his creation." How would the despised Christian virtues of humility, repentance, faith, and charity, in every trial, set all right, and reconcile us to our sufferings and our duty! But let us hear Mr. Hume.

Page 12. "Far be such sentiments from me——I "thank Providence both for the good which I have "already enjoyed, and for the power with which "I am endowed of escaping the ill that threatens me."

A very fine piece of still life, for one about to commit such an act of violence upon himself! A most amiable and gracious portrait of self-murder, after the manner of the Stoics! Suppose, instead of thanking Providence for a "power," which you are going to employ in a manner never intended by your Maker, when you are upon your knees, you should entreat for grace to bear your misfortunes like a man, and improve them to the purpose for which they were sent—Would not this conduct display more piety and resignation than cutting your throat to escape them? Mr. Hume is of a different opinion.

Page 13. "To you it belongs to repine at Provi-"dence, who foolishly imagine that you have no "such power, and who must still prolong a hated

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"life, though loaded with pain and sickness, with "shame and poverty."

Pardon me, sir; the accents of a Christian in such circumstances are very different indeed: "Thou "hast sent me sickness, and I have borne it with "patience, without murmuring; great losses, and I "have blessed thy holy name; calamities and af-"flictions, and I have received them with thanks-"giving."

Page 13. "Do not you teach that, when any ill "befalls me, though by the malice of mine enemies, "I ought to be resigned to Providence, and that "the actions of men are the operations of the Al-"mighty as much as the actions of inanimate beings?"

Certainly they are all under his direction; and now again for the inference:

"When I fall upon my own sword, THEREFORE, "I receive my death equally from the hands of the "Deity, as if it had proceeded from a lion, a preci-"pice, or a fever."

That is, because I must be resigned to God's providence, when, in the course of his dispensations, my life is taken from me, therefore—I may kill myself. This is an *argal* that would have disgraced the grave-digger in Hamlet. In the one instance we employ our utmost exertions to preserve life; in the other, we ourselves destroy it. But it is said,

Page 13. "If my life be not my own, it were "criminal for me to put it in danger, as well as to "dispose of it."

When it pleases God to call for life in the way of

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duty, it must willingly be sacrificed. But suicide never lies in the way of duty. And no two cases can be more essentially different, than that of the *hero* who dies in the cause of his country, his king, or his God, and that of the *wretch*, who through pride, impatience, and cowardice, lays violent hands upon himself. Attempt not, for the credit of philosophy, to confound the two characters; for heaven and hell are not farther asunder.

Page 14. "There is no being—which by ever so "irregular an action can encroach upon the plan of "the Creator's providence, or disorder the universe. "Its operations are his works equally with that "chain of events which it invades, and whichever "principle prevails, we may for that very reason "conclude it to be most favoured by him."

Rare news for pickpockets, profligates, and cutthroats! A lady has paid a visit to a neighbour, and in the evening is returning to her home, which, according to the natural "chain of events," she should reach in peace and quietness. But a man, "exercising the powers with which his Creator has "invested him," ravishes, robs, and murders her. This is the "irregular action, which invades the "chain." Be of good courage, my boy! "Its "operations are equally the works of God with the "chain of events invaded by it, and whichever prin-"ciple prevails, we may for that very reason con-"clude it to be the most favoured by him."—"God "sees no sin in his elect," says the fanatic: but according to the new philosophy, God sees no sin (for

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if this mode of reasoning be just, there neither is nor can be sin) in any man.

Page 14. "When the horror of pain prevails "over the love of life; when a voluntary action "anticipates the effects of blind causes, it is only "in consequence of those powers and principles "which he (the supreme Creator) has implanted in "his creatures."

Does not the argument prove too much? May not the same be said of numberless desires which arise in the heart of man, as at present circumstanced, and which, according to all the rules of true philosophy as well as true religion, ought to be controlled and overruled by a superior principle? Will not the same plea be as valid in the case of him who finds himself strongly excited to revenge, to intemperance, to lust, &c. &c. &c. as of him who is tempted to destroy himself? All, it may be said, happens "in conse-"quence of those powers and principles implanted "in us." The truth is, that human actions must be directed, because they will be judged, by other measures than our pains or our pleasures. On one side is my propensity; on the other, the law of God. Can it be a matter of indifference, which of the two prevails? According to these arguments, as Rousseau has justly observed, "there can be no crimes "which may not be justified by the temptation to "perpetrate them; and as soon as the impetuosity "of passion shall prevail over the horror of guilt, a "disposition to do evil shall be considered as a right "to do it." See *Eloisa*, Lett. cxv.

Page 15. "Divine providence is still inviolate,

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"and placed far beyond the reach of human in-
"juries."

Certainly. When Judas betrayed his Master, it was foreseen that he would do so, and all things were ordered accordingly. "Providence was still invio-
"late;" but Judas was not therefore guiltless.

Page 15. It is affirmed, that "to divert rivers from
"their course, to inoculate for the small-pox, to
"put a period to our own life, to build houses, cul-
"tivate the ground, or sail upon the ocean, are ac-
"tions equally innocent or equally criminal." Why? Because "in all of them we employ our powers of
"mind and body, to produce some innovation in
"the course of nature; and in none of them do we
"any more.

1st. As to the actions of "diverting rivers,
"building houses, cultivating the ground, and sailing
"upon the ocean," there is no occasion to discuss their legality.

2dly. The intention of inoculation is to preserve life, that of suicide can be only to destroy it; so that there is a material difference between them.

3dly. No one ever rested the morality of human actions merely on the circumstance here stated, of
"producing some innovation in the course of nature." Otherwise, one might argue, after the manner of Mr. Hume; "Jack kills a hog, and Dick kills a
"man. They must be equally innocent, or equally
"criminal. Jack employs his powers to produce
"some innovation in the course of nature; and
"Dick does no more. Each turns a few ounces of
"blood out of their natural channel; and the blood

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"of a hog makes as good puddings as that of a "man."

Page 15. "But you are placed by Providence, "like a sentinel, in a particular station; and when "you desert it without being recalled, you are "equally guilty of rebellion against your Almighty "Sovereign, and have incurred his displeasure."

This is an argument urged against suicide by Heathen as well as Christian writers. How does Mr. Hume overthrow it?

Page 16. "I ask, Why do you conclude that Pro-"vidence has placed me in this station? For my "part, I find that I owe my birth to a long chain of "causes, of which many depended on the voluntary "actions of men."

Here we should answer, but that Mr. Hume, like the mother of Sisera, returns answer to himself.

Page 16. "But Providence guided all these causes, "and nothing happens in the universe without its "consent and co-operation."

Now comes Mr. Hume's reply.

"If so, then neither does my death, however vo-"luntary, happen without its consent."

If by *consent* Mr. Hume means *permission*, all the evil ever perpetrated on earth has been perpetrated by God's permission; for otherwise it could not have been perpetrated at all. But if he means *approbation*, we must deny the proposition. Many things are *permitted*, which are not *approved*. Of his approbation or disapprobation, we have other rules by which to judge.

Page 16. "And whenever pain or sorrow so far

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"overcome my patience, as to make me tired of life, "I may conclude that I am recalled from my station "in the clearest and most express terms."

Then may every man put an end to his own life when he thinks proper. The "patience" of some people is soon "overcome;" and perhaps there are few Englishmen, who have not found themselves "tired of life," in one part or other of the month of November; but, happily prevented from hanging themselves by a sense of higher obligation, they have returned to business, and done excellent service to their country, in the month of January. The station of a sentinel is not, nor is it supposed to be, a station of ease, but of duty. A good soldier endures hardship; and a good Christian must do the same. Affliction is "a call, in the most clear and express "terms," not to sullenness and suicide, but to the exercise of patience, resignation, and fortitude. "For even hereunto are we called;" and our commander himself has set us the example. Let us follow him with alacrity and cheerfulness, and we shall one day sit down with him at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens—This is a philosophy that has some comfort in it, and is worth cultivating.

Page 16. "'Tis Providence surely that has placed "me at this present in this chamber: but may I not "leave it when I think proper, without being liable "to the imputation of having deserted my post or "station?"

Is there no difference, then, between your walking out of life, and your walking out of one room into another?

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Page 16. "When I shall be dead, the principles "of which I am composed will still perform their "part in the universe, and will be equally useful in "the grand fabric, as when they composed this in-"dividual creature."

They may be so. Your clay, like that of Alexander, may stop a bunghole.

"The difference to the whole will be no greater "than betwixt my being in a chamber and the open "air. The one change is of more importance to me "than the other; but not more so to the universe."

This is the old argument, that "the life of a man "is of no greater importance to the universe than "that of an oyster."

As far as this argument goes, then, there would be no harm done, if the whole species were to take arms, and, like Bayes's troops in the Rehearsal, "all "kill one another." But we know that the life of man is no insignificant matter in the eye of God and Mr. Hume himself seems to think it of *some* importance to the person concerned.

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LETTER VI.

We are next to inquire, whether suicide be any breach of our duty towards our *neighbour*.

Page 17. "How does it appear that the Almighty "is displeased with those actions which disturb so-"ciety? By the principles which he has implanted "in human nature; and which inspire us with a sen-"timent of remorse if we ourselves have been guilty "of such actions, and with that of blame and disap-"probation, if we ever observe them in others. Let "us now examine whether suicide be of this kind of "actions."

Before we enter upon the examination here proposed, it is obvious to remark, that there is no instinct, or "principle implanted" in human nature, which seems to be more universal and more forcible than that of an aversion to suicide. For a man to destroy himself, is directly against the voice and the very prime inclination of nature. Every thing desires to preserve itself. "No man hateth his own flesh, "but nourisheth and cherisheth it". And, therefore, nations in general, as taught by the immediate voice of nature, by the very first accents which she utters to all, have abhorred men's laying violent hands upon themselves; and, to show their abhorrence, have decreed to pursue self-murderers, after their

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death, with the highest marks of ignominy[e]. The argument from implanted principle, therefore, militates very powerfully against suicide.

But however, the truth is, that in this, as in many other cases, these implanted principles, by due labour and pains, may be overruled and suppressed. On which account, it becomes necessary for us to have some other criterion of moral rectitude, evident to all, and to be eluded by none; lest obduracy should be deemed a proof of innocence, and, because a man feels no remorse, he should apprehend no guilt.

For us Christians, this matter is settled by a law which we esteem to be wise, and just, and good, and most friendly to the interests of society. By the leave of the new philosophers, we will take it with us; and, I am apt to think, it will appear to great advantage on this part of our subject. Holding this light in our hands, then, let us enter the dark labyrinth of Mr. Hume's sophistry, and it will bring us safely out again.

Page 18. "A man who retires from life, does no "harm to society."

There are two ways of imposing upon mankind through the abuse of words; when a good thing is disgraced by a bad name, or a bad thing dignified with a good one. Mr. Hume in this Essay affords us a striking instance of the latter mode of deception. The *self-murderer* is sometimes said by him to "dispose of life," as a pedlar would sell two penny-

[e] See Bp. Taylor's *Duct. Dubitant.* Book III. Chap. ii. Rule 3.

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worth of inkle; at others, to "retire from life," as a gentleman, when he has a mind to leave company, makes his bow, steps gracefully out of the room, and shuts the door. It may be urged, perhaps, that as we understand Mr. Hume's meaning, it is needless to dispute any farther about his language. Be it so. Proceed we then to consider the *sentiment*.

"A man who retires from life, does no harm to "society."

Aristotle thought otherwise, and, as it should seem, better, upon this point. It was his opinion, that they who destroy themselves (without the command of God or the public) are injurious to the commonwealth; from whose service they withdraw themselves if they be innocent, and whose justice they evade if they be guilty[f].

But surely the suicide "does harm to society," by setting a detestable example, which, if generally followed in times of calamity and distress, would desolate a country, instead of defending it. Suicide originates in despair, of all evils political or moral the greatest, as cutting off every source of help and deliverance. Wisely, therefore, as well as bravely, did the Romans return public thanks to their general, who had been vanquished in a dreadful battle by the enemy, because he had nevertheless NOT DESPAIRED of the commonwealth. In the instance before us, example is particularly contagious. Once, as history relates, it became a fashion among the young women of a certain city in Greece to make

[f] See Bp. Taylor, ubi supra.

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away with themselves; nor could the magistrates put an end to the horrid practice, till having ordered the dead bodies of the culprits to be dragged naked through the streets, they overcame this most unnatural love of death by the dread of shame. In our own country, and, it is said, of late, upon the continent, partly by the examples of profligates and partly by the writings of philosophers, the same fashion is more and more diffusing itself among all ranks of people; and the state is continually losing numbers, who might otherwise have lived long to serve it, and then have died in the faith and fear of God. It is not true, therefore, that the suicide "does no harm to society." He does irremediable harm, and may continue to do so, to the years of many generations.

Page 18. "He only ceases to do good; which, if "it is an injury, is of the lowest kind."

To cease to do good is not so criminal as to do harm; but it is criminal, notwithstanding. We were sent into the world to do good; and we should do it to the end. The portion of the "unprofitable ser-"vant" is not to be envied.

Ibid. "But when I withdraw myself altogether "from society, can I be bound any longer?"

It is not possible to "withdraw yourself altoge-"ther from society." There always will be some about you, whom you may improve by your conversation and example, and who may improve others by the relation of them.

Ibid. "I am not obliged to do a small good to

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"society, at the expense of a great harm to my-
"self."

Be not afraid, where no fear is. The "harm" is not "great" of bearing your afflictions as God requires you to bear them, who sends the trial and will send the strength: and in a stage of our existence where so large a part of our duty lies in suffering, the "good" is not "small," of showing your companions in tribulation (and such more or less are all mankind) what it is to suffer and die like a Christian, in piety and patience, cheerfulness and resignation.

Page 19. "If upon account of age and infirmities "I may lawfully resign any office, and employ my "time altogether in fencing against these calamities, "and alleviating, as much as possible, the miseries "of my future life; why may I not cut short these "miseries at once, by an action which is no more "prejudicial to society?"

Suicide is in reality far "more prejudicial to so-"ciety," as we have already shown; because it exhibits a bad example of impatience and despair, which may be copied by any man, who, in the hour of gloom and melancholy (he being always the judge of his own case), shall fancy himself in circumstances which will justify the action. How many have still contrived to the last, in various ways, to do service to their families and to the public, during the intervals of pain and sickness; and when they could no longer teach their friends how to live and act, have taught them (as before-mentioned, but it cannot be

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mentioned too often), that other equally necessary and important lesson—to suffer, and to die?

Mr. Hume is resolved to *die hard*—

Page 19. "But suppose that it is no longer in my "power to promote the interest of society"—

I repeat it once more, that, while you have breath, it *will* be in your power to do so.

—"Suppose that I am a burden to it"—

If the society be Christian, it will readily, charitably, and kindly support the burden.

—"Suppose that my life hinders some person "from being much more useful to society."

As it is your duty to bear your afflictions, it is that of others to assist and minister to you in your necessities; and they cannot be more "useful to society," than while so employed.

"In such cases, my resignation of life must not "only be innocent, but laudable."

Neither "laudable," nor "innocent," believe me, if by "resignation of life," you mean *suicide*, for the reasons, many and good, above assigned.

Page 19. "Most people who lie under any temp-"tation to abandon existence, are in some such situ-"ation: those who have health, or power, or autho-"rity, have commonly better reason to be in humour "with the world."

Yet this is by no means always so. There are seasons when the world, with all its pleasures and all its glories, will fail him who has nothing else to depend upon. Accordingly we have had instances, where, for want of the religious principle, "health, "power, and authority," have proved insufficient to

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keep their possessors "in humour;" and through the prevalence of pride, avarice, intemperance, caprice, and spleen, men have dispatched themselves; some, because they had taken a wrong step, and were blamed for it; some, because they had eaten too much, and therefore life was insupportable; some, to defraud their creditors; some, because they were tired of buckling and unbuckling their shoes; and some, to save charges. Poor unhappy man! How art thou tossed upon the ocean of life, when once driven from the helm, which should direct thy course through time to eternity!

Page 20. Mr. Hume states the following case:

"A man is engaged in a conspiracy for the public "interest; is seized upon suspicion; is threatened "with the rack; and knows from his own weakness "that the secret will be extorted from him: could "such a one consult the public interest better "than by putting a quick period to a miserable "life?"

1st. To avoid so untoward a situation, before a man "engages in a conspiracy," let him be very well assured that it is *indeed* "for the public interest;" that he is in the way of his duty; and that the law of his God will bear him out in the undertaking.

2dly. This point being secured, and the action of suicide supposed to be (as we apprehend) *malum in se*, then the resolution of the question is clear; we are not to "do evil that good may come:" it were better the conspiracy should be discovered than that the man should commit a sin, for the reason assigned elsewhere by Mr. Hume himself, that "the

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"damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil "than the subversion of a thousand millions of king-"doms[g]." Let the man therefore continue in his integrity, and trust God for the event.

3dly. He who is invited to take a part in a dangerous and desperate enterprise, should consider consequences possible and probable, and weigh well his own strength beforehand; and if he suspects himself likely to fail in the day of trial, let him by no means engage.

A case of this kind may doubtless be imagined, which will seem extremely hard; and mankind will be disposed not only to excuse, but even to honour him who thus falls by his own hand, to save his companions and his country. The behaviour of some Christian virgins in the early ages, who chose rather to inflict death upon themselves, than suffer the violation of their purity by their ruffian persecutors, has obtained in its favour the suffrage of the Fathers, as a case excepted from the general rule; and we cannot readily blame those who, to preserve their honour, despised their life. They committed one sin, to escape another which they deemed greater (though, as their will would not have been concerned, they were perhaps mistaken); and destroyed the temple, to avoid its profanation. But these extraordinary instances, whatever may be thought of them, cannot prove that to be lawful, which is in itself unlawful[h].

[g] Essay on the Immortality of the Soul, p. 33.
[h] See Bp. Taylor, ubi supra.

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As to the other case stated by Mr. Hume in the same page 20, that of "a malefactor justly condemned to a shameful death," there can be no difficulty. It is the duty of him who has transgressed the laws of his country to make the satisfaction they require. The virtues called forth upon the sad occasion, of repentance, and faith in the divine mercy consequent thereupon, are of the highest benefit to himself in his most important concerns; while his example at his death undoes, as far as in him lies, the evil perpetrated in his life, and, by warning others not to offend, is of eminent service to the community. I am astonished that Mr. Hume should ask, "Can any reason be imagined why he may not anticipate his punishment?" and assert, that "he invades the business of Providence no more than the magistrate did who ordered his execution;" and that "his voluntary death is equally advantageous to society." It is an unparalleled outrage at once upon common sense, the laws, and the religion of his country.

We may now, I believe, venture to conclude, notwithstanding all which Mr. Hume has said to the contrary, that suicide is a breach of our duty to our *neighbour*.

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LETTER VII.

LET us consider, in the last place, whether suicide be not a breach of that duty we owe to *ourselves.* On this head Mr. Hume is short, and therefore we need not be long.

The argument lies in a narrow compass. Man is subject to misery, and suicide is the way to escape it.

Page 20. "That suicide may often be consistent "with interest, and with our duty to ourselves, no "one can question, who allows, that age, sickness, "or misfortune, may render life a burden, and make "it worse even than annihilation."

That they "make it worse than annihilation" is not the general opinion; because, however afflicted, few seem disposed to choose annihilation (if they thought they could obtain it) in preference. That the calamities of human life are many and great, there is neither room nor occasion to dispute. They have employed the pens of poets, orators, and historians, from age to age. They are frequently, without doubt, "a burden." But the burden has often been borne; and what has been done, may be done again. It is laid upon us by our sins, and is no more than we deserve; therefore it ought to be borne patiently. It will last but for a little while; there-

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fore it should be borne cheerfully. Through the mercies of a Saviour, it will terminate in everlasting felicity; and therefore it should be borne joyfully. This is the ground upon which we stand. These are the principles by which we abide. Admit them, they solve every difficulty, and disperse every cloud. Through the valley of the shadow of death they open a fair and lovely prospect, extending far and wide beyond it. At their presence sorrow brightens into joy, light arises in darkness, and the mass of human wretchedness melts away before it, like the morning mist upon the mountains. If the philosophers possess any principles that are better, and better founded, let them be communicative; if not, let them embrace these with us, and not be faithless, but believing. Whoever they may be of them that read this, almost, I think, they are, at the moment, persuaded to be Christians. Would to God that every one who reads it, might become not only almost, but altogether such!

If, on the other hand, unhappily seduced by the subtlety and sophistry of Mr. Hume, men determine to adopt what he calls his philosophy, that is, to doubt concerning the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of rewards and punishments; whether there be any providence concerning itself with human affairs; and whether the world be governed by a good or an evil being, or by any being at all—then may they, with Mr. Hume, esteem suicide "to be no crime, but the "only way in which we can be useful to society, by "setting an example, which, if imitated, would pre-

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"serve to every one his chance for happiness in life, "and would effectually free him from all danger of "misery."

But, according to a common saying, we are to look for the business of a letter in the *Postscript*. Subjoined to the Essay is a *Note*, in which Mr. Hume asserts, and endeavours to prove, "that suicide is as "lawful under the Christian dispensation as it was "to the Heathens." If this be the case, we must beg his pardon for having supposed that Christianity was glanced at above, as the *superstition* which kept men in bondage, and prevented them from taking this short method to escape the evils of life. The Gospel, it seems, allows of suicide. It must be the Gospel, not according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, or St. John, but *according to Mr. Hume*. I know of no single text that will prove the point; though I once heard of a gentleman who did effectually prove it by two texts judiciously laid together: "Judas departed, and went, and hanged himself"—"Go, and do thou likewise.'

But though there be no text which enjoins it (as, considering the importance of the subject, might have been expected), Mr. Hume is clear "there is "not a single text which prohibits it."—"That great "and infallible rule of faith and practice," continues he very gravely, "which must control all philoso-"phy and human reasoning, has left us in this parti-"cular to our natural liberty."

The "liberty" of destroying himself cannot be thought very "natural" by any one believing in a God who placed him here, and placed him here with some

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view and design. Much less can a Christian, while he continues in his senses, imagine himself left at this liberty by the Gospel; since above all things it enjoins and exhorts him, after the example of his Saviour, to suffer in patience that he may reign in glory. Every precept of this sort is a virtual prohibition of suicide, which argues the last degree of impatience.

"Resignation to Providence is, indeed, recom-
"mended in Scripture; but that implies only sub-
"mission to ills that are unavoidable, not to
"such as may be remedied by prudence or cou-
"rage."

"Prudence and courage" are both excellent things: they are two of the cardinal virtues. But that suicide is a display of them, is a proposition hitherto unknown to Reason, Law, and Gospel. There could be no occasion to preach patience under sufferings if it were so, because then no man could be under a necessity of suffering. He might avoid it, at a moment's warning, by the knife or the halter. There could be no such things as "unavoidable "ills;" and the Gospel precepts would be almost as absurd as Mr. Hume's Note.

"*Thou shalt not kill*, is evidently meant to exclude
"only the killing of others, over whose life we have
"no authority.—Magistrates punish criminals capi-
"tally, notwithstanding the letter of the law."

Magistrates have authority over the lives of others; but have we authority over our own, to put an end to them when we please? Surely not; and therefore suicide is justly accounted and treated by

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our laws as one species of murder forbidden by the commandment.

"But were this commandment ever so express "against suicide, it would now have no authority; "for all the law of Moses is abolished, except so far "as it is established by the law of nature. And we "have already endeavoured to prove, that suicide is "not prohibited by that law."

This is modest—"We have *endeavoured* to "prove." But the endeavour, it is humbly apprehended, has been in vain, and ever will be so while there shall be piety enough left on earth to acknowledge God as the Lord of life and death; for so long men will judge it their duty to adore his power, and wait his pleasure. A trifling alteration in our religious services might perhaps answer Mr. Hume's purpose, without the *abolition* of any part. Let that little particle NOT be expunged from the *Commandments*, and inserted in the *Creed*.

"In all cases Christians and Heathens are upon "the same footing"—

They very soon will be so, when Mr. Hume's philosophy shall once become the established religion.

"Cato and Brutus, Arria and Portia, acted he-"roically; those who now imitate their example, "ought to receive the same praises from poste-"rity."

Christianity inculcates a far nobler heroism. It teaches us, when we are engaged in a good cause, to die for it like men, but not by our own hands; to "en-

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"dure the cross, despising the shame." Cato had not patience to do the one, and Brutus was too proud to do the other. That fortitude is not complete, which cannot do both. But surely, Cato might have lived, though Cæsar conquered; and Brutus have left the world with a quiet conscience, though he had forborne to stab the dictator or himself. Of the Roman ladies *nil nisi bonum.*—But there have been martyrs of that sex among us Christians, who could have shown to them likewise "a more excellent way." There cannot be a finer or more just representation of this matter than that given by Mrs. Chapone in the story of FIDELIA, first published in the *Adventurer*, No. 77, &c. and afterwards reprinted in a little volume, entitled, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse.* Every female, who, on account of her crimes, her miseries, or both, may be tempted to put a period to her life, should read that story. She may read it again and again, with increasing pleasure and improvement. Nor let me omit this opportunity of recommending to general perusal a charming Ode, published among the poems of Mr. Warton, styled THE SUICIDE, in which the best of poetry is applied to the best of purposes.

"The power of committing suicide is regarded "by Pliny as an advantage which men possess even "above the Deity himself."

Shame upon Pliny for uttering such a sentiment! but more shame upon Mr. Hume for retailing it in a Christian country! The thought is

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equally blasphemous and absurd;—blasphemous, in exalting man above the Deity, on so wretched an account; absurd, because as God is liable to no calamities, he cannot need the means to escape them.

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LETTER VIII.

SINCE the appearance of the unbelieving fraternity among us in these latter days, they have been celebrated for many extraordinary qualities; but their characteristic virtue, I think, has been *modesty*. A remarkable instance of this virtue has manifested itself in their conduct respecting the publication of a certain edifying pamphlet, entitled, *Doubts of the Infidels; or, Queries relative to Scriptural Inconsistencies and Contradictions—Submitted to the Consideration of the Bench of Bishops—By a weak Christian.* It stole abroad in so humble and reserved a manner, without the name of printer or vender, that it was a long time before I heard there was such a pamphlet in being. Informed, however, by a friend, that there certainly was such a thing, and that he had actually seen it, I made application to several booksellers of note in town; but they declared they knew nothing of the matter. As I am one of those who love to learn what is stirring, I was not to be easily put by; and therefore rested not, till I had made myself master of a copy. Happy in my prize, with my hand upon my pocket I betook myself immediately home, and having provided the implement necessary for the purpose, began to open the leaves.

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In the process of this operation, the first words that caught my eye were the following, in page v, of the epistle dedicatory to my lords the bishops: "Inner chambers of the holy Inquisition—Whips, "cords, pullies, screws, wheels, iron-crows, and red-"hot pincers." Having no predilection for good things of this particular kind, I resumed my work, determining not to peep any more, till I came to the top of page 20, where my attention was again forcibly arrested by the expressions, "Ripping women with "child, dashing infants to pieces against the rocks, "and broiling men to death with slow fires."

I now laid down the pamphlet, and considered with myself, what had happened lately among us, to occasion this lamentable yelping. Sometimes I thought the archbishop of York, in the course of his last visitation, must have wedged some northern heresiarch under the screw, and with one turn of the machine, to the great diversion of the company, cracked all the bones in his skin, like the claws of a lobster. At other times I concluded (though no mention had been made of it in the *Morning Chronicle*) that his grace of Canterbury had invited the bishops to dine with him upon a roasted infidel, whipped to death by his chaplains. That one of these events had taken place, there seemed to be little doubt, though it was impossible to say which.

I finished, however, my task of leaf-opening, and began to read regularly; when I found that a deed had been done still more atrocious and petrifying than either of the above; for that, by an act of parliament procured by these same bloody-minded pre-

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lates of ours, the infidels are now obliged, on a Sunday evening, to blaspheme in PRIVATE!

This is a *falling off*, to which my memory furnishes me with nothing similar, unless it be the story of a man much given to the use of the *long bow*, who asserted one morning to his family, that he had just seen *forty* couple of dogs running through the yard. It being denied that so many were kept in the country, "Nay," cried he, "I am sure there "were *twenty*." The audience still continuing sceptical, "Why then," said he with perfect gravity, "it "was *our little brown cur!*"

For such "cruel, barbarous, and inhuman" usage, these gentlemen are determined, it seems, to have their revenge upon the church, and really think themselves able, at this time of day, to write revelation out of the world, in a twelve-penny pamphlet! Take this whole business together, and it is enough to make the weeping philosopher laugh.

In the thirty sections of their pamphlet, they have produced a list of *difficulties* to be met with in reading the Old and New Testament. Had I been aware of their design, I could have enriched the collection with many more, at least as good, if not a little better. But they have compiled, I dare say, what they deemed the best, and, in their own opinion, presented us with the essence of infidelity in a thumb phial, the very fumes of which, on drawing the cork, are to strike the bench of bishops dead at once.

Let not the unlearned Christian be alarmed, "as "though some strange thing had happened to him,"

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and modern philosophy had discovered arguments to demolish religion, never heard of before. The old ornaments of deism have been "broken off," upon the occasion, "and cast into the fire, and there "came out this calf." These same difficulties have been again and again urged and discussed in public; again and again weighed and considered by learned and sensible men, of the laity as well as of the clergy, who have by no means been induced by them to renounce their faith.

Indeed, why should they? For is any man surprised that difficulties should occur in the books of Scripture, those more especially of the Old Testament? Let him reflect upon the variety of matter on which they treat; the distance of the times to which they refer; the wide difference of ancient manners and customs from those of the age in which we live; the very imperfect knowledge we have of these, as well as of the language in which they are described; the conciseness of the narratives, sufficient for the purpose intended, but not for gratifying a restless curiosity; above all, the errors and defects of translations.

Many and painful are the researches sometimes necessary to be made for settling points of this kind. Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines, which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer. When this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written upon the subject. And as people in general, for one reason or another, like short objections better than long answers, in this

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mode of disputation (if it can be styled such) the odds must ever be against us; and we must be content with those for our friends, who have honesty and erudition, candour and patience, to study both sides of the question. Be it so.

In the mean time, if we are called upon seriously for satisfaction on any point, it is our duty to give the best in our power. But our adversaries will permit us to observe, that the way they are pleased to take (the way, I mean, of *doubts* and *difficulties*) is the longest way about; and I much fear they will never find it the shortest way home. For if they really have determined with themselves not to become Christians till every difficulty that may be started concerning the revealed dispensations of God, or any part of them, be fully cleared up, I will fairly tell them, that, I apprehend, they must die *deists*. I will likewise farther tell them, that if they should resolve not to believe in the existence of God, till every objection can be solved relative to the works of creation and the course of his providence, I verily believe they must die *atheists*. At least, I will not undertake their conversion, in either case. For, in the first place, whether the solution be satisfactory to themselves, none but themselves can be the judges; and their prejudices will not suffer them to judge fairly. In the second place, if they produce an hundred objections, and we can solve ninety-nine of them, that which remains unsolved will be deemed a plea sufficient to justify their continuing in incredulity. In the third place, it is impossible, in the nature of things, that we should be equal to the solu-

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tion of every difficulty, unless we were well acquainted with many points of which it has pleased God to keep us in ignorance, till the last day shall open and unfold them. Nay, in some instances, it is impossible, unless we could see and know, as God himself sees and knows.

But it is an axiom in science, that difficulties are of no weight against demonstrations. The existence of God once proved, we are not, in reason, to set that proof aside, because we cannot at present account for all his proceedings. The divine legation of Moses, and that of Jesus Christ, stand upon their proper evidence, which cannot be superseded and nullified by any pretended or real difficulties occurring in the Jewish and Christian dispensations. If we can solve the difficulties, so much the better; but if we cannot, the evidence is exactly where it was. Upon that evidence is our faith founded, and not upon the ability of any man, or set of men, to explain particular portions of Scripture, and to answer the objections which may be made to them. Otherwise, our faith, instead of resting on the power of God, would rest on the weakness of man, and might be subverted every day. Now the evidence that may be produced for the divine missions of Moses and of Jesus Christ, is such as never was produced in favour of any others laying claim to divine missions, since the world began; and it is such as no person can reject, without being obliged to believe a series of absurdities and impossibilities, that, in any other case, would choke the faith of the greatest bigot in Christendom: which is bringing the matter as near to

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demonstration as a matter of this kind is capable of being brought, or as any reasonable being would desire it to be brought.

Thus much being premised, to prevent mistakes, I shall proceed in the next Letter to the consideration of the first section, the subject of which is that of Miracles.

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LETTER IX.

THE substance of this section, thrown into an argumentative form, stands thus: "Miracles are not "wrought now; therefore they never were wrought "at all."

One would wonder how the premises and the conclusion could be brought together. No man would in earnest assert the necessity of miracles being repeated, for the confirmation of a revelation, to every new generation, and to each individual of which it is composed. Certainly not. If they were once wrought, and duly entered on *record*, the record is *evidence* ever after. This reasoning holds good, respecting them, as well as other facts; and to reason otherwise, would be to introduce universal confusion.

It is said, "They are things in their own nature "far removed from common belief."

They are things which do not happen every day, to be sure. It were absurd, from the very nature of them, to expect that they should. But what reason can there be for concluding from thence, that none ever were wrought? Why should it be thought a thing more incredible, that the Ruler of the world should interpose, upon proper occasions, to control the operations of nature, than that he should direct them in ordinary? It is not *impossible* that a teacher

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should be sent from God. It may be *necessary* that one should be sent. If one be sent, he must bring *credentials*, to show that he is so sent; and what can those credentials be, but *miracles*, or acts of almighty power, such as God only can perform? In the case of Jesus, common sense spake by the mouth of the Jewish ruler, and all the sophistry in the world cannot invalidate or perplex the argument: "Master, "thou art a teacher come from God; for no man "can do the miracles which thou doest, except God "be with him."

—"They (miracles) require something more than "the usual testimony of history for their support."

Why so? If they *may* be wrought, and good reasons are assigned for their *having been* wrought, upon any particular occasion, "the usual testimony "of history" is sufficient to evince that they *were* wrought. But the truth is, that they *have* "something more than the usual testimony of history;" they have *much* more; for no facts in the world ever were attested by such an accumulated weight of evidence, as we can produce on behalf of the miracles recorded of Moses and Christ; insomuch, that the mind of any person tolerably well informed concerning them, till steeled against conviction by the prejudices of infidelity, revolts at the very idea of their being accounted forgeries.

Page 3. "When Livy speaks of shields sweating "blood, of its raining hot stones, and the like, we "justly reject and disbelieve the improbable asser-"tions."

Doubtless. But what comparison can be pro-

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perly instituted between these hearsay stories concerning pagan prodigies, and a series of miracles, like those openly and publicly wrought, for years together, in the face of the world, by Moses and by Christ? The historical facts related by Livy may be true, whatever becomes of his prodigies; but, in the other case, the miracles are interwoven with, and indeed constitute, the body of the history. No separation can possibly be made; the whole must be received, or the whole must be rejected.

Ibid. "Neither is any credit given to the wonderful account of curing diseases by the touch, "said to be possessed by Mr. Greatrix, though we "find it in the Philosophical Transactions."

Mr. Greatrix's general method of curing diseases was not, as I remember, simply and instantaneously by the *touch*, but by the operation of *stroking* the part affected, and that long continued, or frequently repeated. Sometimes, it is said, this stroking succeeded, and sometimes it failed. If (as we are informed in a note) Boyle, Wilkins, Cudworth, and other great men, attested the fact, that there were persons who found themselves relieved by this new device, undoubtedly there were such persons. But whether this relief were temporary; whether it were owing in any, or what degree, to the working of the imagination, or to a real physical change effected by the application of a warm hand, or any particular temperament in the constitution of the stroker; these are points, which the reader may find discussed in Mr. Boyle's letter to Henry Stubbe, written upon the occasion, in which he reproves Stubbe, as he well

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might, for supposing there was any thing necessarily and properly miraculous in the affair. Mr. Valentine Greatrix, by all accounts, was an honest, harmless, melancholy country gentleman, of the kingdom of Ireland, who, after having gained great reputation by *stroking* in England, returned to pass his latter days quietly and peaceably in his native country, and was heard of no more. He had no new doctrine to promulgate, pretended to no divine mission, and, I dare say, never thought of his cures being employed to discredit those of his Saviour. The wonders reported to have been wrought formerly by Apollonius Tyaneus, and more lately at the tomb of Abbé Paris, have been applied to the same purpose. But their day is over—and now all depends upon poor Mr. Valentine Greatrix!

Page 3. "The miracles of the Old Testament were "all performed in those ages of which we have no "credible history."

Pardon me. There cannot be a more credible history than that of Moses; since it is impossible that he could have written, or the Israelites received his history, had it not been true. Would he, think you, have called them together, and told them, to their faces, they had all heard and seen such and such wonders, when every man, woman, and child in the company knew they had never heard or seen any thing of the kind? What? Not one honest soul to cry out *priestcraft* and *imposture!* Let these gentlemen try their hands in this way. They have often been requested to do it. Let one of them assemble the good people of London and Westminster, and

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tell them, that on a certain day and hour he divided the Thames, and led them on dry ground over to Southwark; appealing to them for the truth of what he says. I should like to see the event of such an appeal. There are many such appeals recorded of Moses to his nation; and the book, in which these appeals are so recorded, contains the municipal law by which that nation has been governed, from the days of Moses to the dissolution of their polity. This is a fact, without a parallel upon earth; and let any man produce an hypothesis to account for it, consistently with the idea of Moses being a deceiver, which will abide the test of common sense for five minutes. If the deists can reason us out of our faith, let them do so: but we are not weak enough, as yet, to be sneered or scoffed out of it.

Page 3. "What reply can be made to those who "affirm, that miracles have always been confined to "the early and fabulous ages?"

The reply is easy—that miracles were performed, by Christ and his apostles, in the age, of all others, esteemed the most polite and learned; and that the adversaries of Christianity, in those days, never thought of denying the facts. It was a piece of assurance reserved for these latter times.

—"That all nations have had them; but that "they disappeared in proportion as men became en-"lightened, and capable of discovering imposture."

Many nations have had them, true or false: the false disappeared, when discovered to be so; but the true will abide for ever. The Jewish rulers had their senses about them, as much as other people;

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and those senses sharpened to the utmost by envy and malice. Yet were they obliged to confess—"This man doth many miracles." It may be added, that had there been no genuine miracles, there would have been no counterfeits.

Upon the whole—in this section, on so leading an article, the infidels have made no considerable progress. Rather, they can hardly be said, in the nautical phrase, to have *got under way*.

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LETTER X.

Our infidels seem inclined to deny that Moses was the author of the books which go under his name. To this purpose they observe (and the observation is certainly a judicious one), that he could not have written the account of his own death, which occurs in the last chapter of Deuteronomy. There are likewise, as we all very well know, a few other passages, here and there, allowed both by Jews and Christians to have been inserted since his time. But these will never prevent us from looking upon him as the author of the Pentateuch, any more than a few interpolated passages in the works of Josephus prevent us from ascribing those works to that author. The Pentateuch and the institutions it prescribes have been in being ever since the days of Moses: how, when, and by whom, could they have been forged?

But they themselves do not build much on this part of their performance; for they say, page 4, "Supposing these and other objections of the like "nature to be removed"—which they therefore suppose *may* be removed—"the Scripture is frequently "contradictory with regard to facts." Perhaps not. At least we must have some proof; and so, in their own words, *vide infra*.

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"And represents the all-wise Creator as angry, "repenting, unjust, arbitrary, and"—in short—"as "a demon."

That it represents him "as angry and repenting," is true; it likewise "represents him as coming down, "and going up"—all in condescension to our capacities, and "after the manner of men," as every child knows among us. Nor can we speak of the Deity in any other manner, if we would speak intelligibly to the generality of mankind[a]. That the Scripture should represent God as "unjust, arbitrary, and a "demon," is very bad indeed. Let us hope better things than these of the Scripture, however. When the several charges are brought forward, we must endeavour to answer them. And notwithstanding the jokes of these gentlemen about the *pillory*, one or other of us, I am afraid, will be found to deserve it.

Page 5. "Did God create light before the sun?" Most assuredly. Why not? When the orb of the sun was formed on the fourth day, it became the appointed receptacle of light, from whence that glorious fluid was to be dispensed, for the benefit of the system. Before the formation of the solar orb, light was supported in action by some other means, as seemed good to the Creator. The earth might be made to revolve by the same agency, and then another question is answered: "How could time be di-"vided into days, before the creation of the sun;

[a] See a remarkable acknowledgement of this point by Collins, in Leland's View of the Deistical Writers; Letter xxix. vol. ii. p. 125. edit. 4th.

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"since a day is the time between sun rise and sun "rise?"

Page 5. "How could God divide the light from "darkness, since darkness is nothing but the mere "privation of light?

The light was divided from the darkness, as it is now, by the interposition of the earth. This is plain; because it follows, "God called the light day, and "the darkness he called night." *Day* was the state of the hemisphere on which light irradiated; and *night* was the state of the opposite hemisphere, on which rested the shadow projected by the body of the earth. I see no absurdity in all this. But may not the assertion, that "darkness is only the mere "privation of light," be controverted? When "Moses "says, that darkness was upon the face of the deep," he did not mean that *nothing* was there. Of the darkness in Egypt, it is said, that it "might be *felt*." And if the fire at the solar orb could be suddenly extinguished, would not the whole body of the celestial fluid instantly become a torpid congealed mass, and bind the creation in chains of adamant? At the beginning, "light was formed out of dark-"ness;" and therefore may not the truth be this? In Scripture language, may not light be the celestial fluid, in a certain condition, and a certain degree of motion; and darkness the same fluid in a different condition, and without that degree of motion, or when such motion is interrupted by the interposition of an opaque body? A room, for example, is full of light. Close the shutters, and that light instantly disappears. But what is become of it? It is not

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annihilated. No: the substance, which occasioned the sensation of light to the eye, is still present as before, but occasions that sensation no longer. Let philosophers consider and determine.

Page 5. "How could the firmament be created, "since there is no firmament, and the false notion "of its existence is no more than an imagination of "the ancient Grecians?"

Never again let critics, while they live, undertake to censure the writings of an author, before they understand something of the language in which he wrote. The *Greek* version of the Seventy has indeed given us the word στερεωμα, which has produced in our translation the corresponding word *firmament*. But these terms by no means furnish us with the true idea of the original word, which is derived from a verb signifying, to *spread abroad*, *expand*, *enlarge*, *make thin*, &c. The proper rendering then is, *the expansion*. But *expansion* of what? Doubtless, of the celestial fluid before mentioned, of light, air, ether, or whatever you please to call it. In Scripture it is styled the *heavens*. "Who stretcheth out "the heavens like a curtain[t]!—That stretcheth out "the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out "as a tent to dwell in[u]." How far this expansion of the heavens extends, is another question. That portion of it diffused around the earth is well known by the name of *the atmosphere;* and its force may at any time be felt by the hand, when laid on the aperture of an exhausted receiver. Sir Isaac Newton appears to have thought, that it might reach to the

[t] Psal. civ. [u] Isa. xl. 22.

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orb of Saturn, and beyond, even through all the celestial spaces. It seems to go out from one part of the system, and circulate to the other, and nothing is hidden from its influence; to be in every place, and to possess powers which nothing is able to withstand. The Royal Society, by its late worthy president, earnestly requested Dr. Priestley to make inquiry after this same wonderful substance; so that, by and by, it is likely, we may hear more of it[x]: and gentlemen may by degrees be induced to entertain a more favourable opinion of the Jewish legislator; as it is said of a great man, some years ago, that having, in the decline of life, accidentally dipped into a Bible, he declared, "he found Moses to be a "clever fellow; and if he had met with him a little "sooner, he did not know but he might have read "him through."

Page 6. "How shall we explain the business of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and of a "tree of life—?"

As my lords the bishops have kindly taken so much pains to bring the infidels into a good way of spending their Sunday evenings at home, I think it would not be amiss, if they were, now and then, at such times, to read a sermon. Let me therefore recommend to them four discourses, by the present

[x] Many curious particulars concerning that, and other subjects connected with it, have already been communicated to the world by the reverend and learned Mr. Jones, in his very valuable work, entitled, "Physiological Disquisitions, or Discourses on the "Natural Philosophy of the Elements:" printed for Rivington and Robinson.

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dean of Canterbury, on the creation of man, the garden of Eden, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge. It may appear, perhaps, that the Mosaic history is not necessarily so pregnant with absurdities as they are apt to suppose; but that a rational account may be given of man's primeval state, as there described, and of that trial to which he was subjected by his Maker.

In another part of the pamphlet, page 39, it is objected to us, "that Adam was threatened with death "*on the day* of his transgression, but lived at least "eight hundred years afterwards."

The execution of the sentence, then, was respited, in consideration of his repentance, agreeably to the proceedings of God with his descendants, both individuals and communities, in numberless instances upon record. Transgression rendered him mortal, and his life from thenceforward was a gradual progress through labour, pain, and sorrow, towards death.

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LETTER XI.

PAGE 3. "Is the account of the fall of man, in the "book of Genesis, physical, or allegorical?"

I apprehend it to be an historical narrative of what really passed in the garden of Eden. With regard to the parties concerned, there is no dispute concerning three of them, the Creator, the man, and the woman. But there appears a fourth, whose nature and character it has been thought not so easy to ascertain. He is called THE SERPENT; but is throughout represented as an intelligent being, and treated as such. He proves himself also to be the TEMPTER. Can we doubt, for one moment, who this being is? The SERPENT, the OLD SERPENT, the DRAGON, are the appellations bestowed in the New Testament, upon the great adversary of mankind, the TEMPTER, the DECEIVER, the ACCUSER, the MURDERER. One question remains, whether, upon the occasion before us, he assumed the form of the natural serpent, or be only described under the name, and by imagery and expressions borrowed from the corresponding nature and qualities of that creature, and applied to him by analogy? Either way, it is beyond all controversy with us who believe the Scriptures, that HE is the principal agent in the whole affair: HE is all along intended, and addressed; on HIM was the weight

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and force of the tremendous sentence to light; between HIS seed and that of the woman was the enmity to subsist; and HIS head was to be finally crushed by victorious Messiah. However Christians may have differed in their interpretation of particular words and phrases, this is the substance of what always has been, and always must be maintained among them upon the subject. If all be confined to the natural serpent, or beast of the field, the account must then be, as Dr. Middleton contends, *apologue* or *fable*, with a moral couched under it. But the writers of the New Testament ever refer to it as true history, and invariably declare SATAN to have been the SERPENT, who "through his subtlety "deceived Eve." The account of man's redemption is no *apologue*, but true history, built upon and presupposing the truth and reality of his temptation and fall, effected by the wiles of his enemy; who, for that reason, was to be crushed, together with his works, by the power of the Redeemer. As to the change wrought in the natural serpent after the fall (a subject on which the infidels divert themselves more than they will divert any body else) no man can deny that a change might take place; and no man can precisely ascertain the nature of such change, unless he knew the form in which that species of creatures was originally made. Nor does the sentence (so far as it may relate to the natural serpent) imply, that he should *choose* dust for his food, or that it should be his *only* food. They who grovel in dust, must sometimes come in for a mouthful. The expression intimates to us the very lowest degree of prostration,

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humiliation, and the most abject wretchedness, similar to that other of the prophet, " His enemies shall " *lick the dust*." Let gentlemen take care, that they are not of the number. The history of man's fall is no fable, and will hereafter be found no jest.

Page 6.—" A tree of life, which God was obliged " to guard by Cherubim and a flaming sword, lest " man should eat of the fruit, and become immortal?"

The passage here alluded to has long been a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. It may, perhaps, cease to be so, when the following particulars are duly weighed and considered:

1st. There is no reason in the world for supposing the Cherubim here mentioned to have been different from those described at large, as exhibited in vision to Ezekiel, figures of which were placed in the tabernacle and temple. Moses says, " God placed " *Cherubim*." The people for whom he wrote were perfectly well acquainted with the nature, form, and design of them. The prophet, upon beholding them in vision, declares, " I knew that they were *the Cherubim*."

2dly. The words rendered in our translation, " A " flaming sword turning every way," may, and, it is apprehended, ought to be rendered, " A devouring " fire turning or rolling upon itself;" as the Cherubim, which Ezekiel saw, are said to have stood in the midst of a fire " catching, or infolding itself." The expressions are equivalent, and correspond exactly.

3dly. This body of *fire*, generally attended by and subsisting in a *cloud*, is styled " the glory of the

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"Lord;" and always accompanied the appearance of the Cherubim.

4thly. The most ancient expositions left in the world, which are the two Jewish Targums, paraphrase the verse thus: "And he thrust out the man, "and caused the glory of his presence to dwell of "old, at the east of the garden of Eden, above the "two Cherubim."

5thly. If such be the real import of the passage, and it relate only to the manifestation of the divine presence, by its well known symbol, above or between the Cherubim, may we not fairly and reasonably conclude, that the design of such manifestation, at the east of the garden of Eden, was the same as it was confessedly afterwards in the tabernacle and temple; namely, to reveal the will of God for the conduct of his people; to accept the sacrifices offered to him; and favourably to regard the prefigurative atonement made by "the sprinkling of blood, with-"out which there was (after the fall) no remission?" And all this was done "to KEEP," or PRESERVE, "the way to the tree of life," immortality being now the object of a new covenant, with other conditions. There were good reasons why our first parent should not be suffered, in the state to which he had reduced himself, to "put forth his hand, and "take, and eat." The dispensation of Eden was at an end. Old sacraments were abolished, and new ones were to be instituted. In the spirit of repentance and faith the delinquents were to wait, "till "one happier Man should regain the blissful seat," and "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers;"

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himself the true TREE OF LIFE IN THE PARADISE OF GOD.

To the learned and candid of all denominations these remarks are submitted. If there be any thing in them, the text in question, which has been so long the butt of infidels and the stumbling-block of believers, not only becomes cleared of its difficulties, but throws a light and a glory on the whole patriarchal dispensation.

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LETTER XII.

PAGE 7. "The account of the flood is very embar-
"rassing."

Possibly it may—There was a great deal done in a little time; and neither these gentlemen nor myself were present to see how it was done.

Ibid. "From whence came the water?"

From the place to which it returned, and in which it has remained (God be praised!) ever since. The globe of the earth, as the Scriptures inform us, is a shell, or hollow sphere, enclosing within it a body of waters, styled "the great deep," or abyss. The earth, at the creation, was covered on all sides with water, which, at the command of God, retired to this abyss beneath, from whence, at the same command, it came forth in the days of Noah; and, having performed its task, was again dismissed, as before. "The fountains of the great deep," by the divine power, were "broken up;" gravity for a time was suspended, or overcome; the waters were violently thrown upwards into the atmosphere, and descended in torrents and cataracts of rain. If we measure the circumference of the earth, and gauge its contents, we shall find water enough, I dare say, to answer every purpose mentioned in the book of

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Genesis[y]. The shells, and other marine bodies, deposited in the bowels and on the tops of the highest mountains all the world over, afford sufficient evidence, that the waters have been there. If any one can give a better account than Moses has done, when and how they came there, e'en let us have it. A learned and respectable person expresses his surprise, that the shell fish should *transport themselves* from the bed of the ocean, where they were much better accommodated, to so uncomfortable a situation as the summit of a barren mountain. Alas, worthy sir, it was no *party of pleasure!* Whenever they took the journey, depend upon it, it was—"upon "compulsion, Hal!"

Page 8.—"Neither can we easily persuade infidels "that *the windows of heaven were opened*, while they "know it has no windows."

They can know nothing of the matter, till they know the meaning of the phrase, and its usage in the Scriptures, where the heavens are said to be *opened* when it rains, and *shut* when rain is withholden, and the like. What is more common than such modes of expression are in all languages? Suppose, to describe an uncommon fall of rain, I should say, "The *sluices* of heaven were opened;"

y "Some are puzzled to find water enough to form an univer-"sal deluge: to assist their endeavours it may be remarked, "that was it all precipitated which is dissolved in the air, it "might probably be sufficient to cover the surface of the whole "earth to the depth of above thirty feet." WATSON's Chemical Essays, vol. iii. p. 87.

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would it not be the height of absurdity to reply, that the sluices of heaven cannot be opened, because it has no sluices? Every body knows the expression to be metaphorical. But the truth is, that the original word[z] does not signify *windows*, according to the modern idea, but rather *clefts*, *fissures*, *passages*: these were *opened*, the clouds were *rent*, as we say. The waters rising from beneath met the rains descending from above, and, uniting their forces, they deluged the world.

Page 7. "It (the flood) ceased not by annihilation "of the waters, but they were evaporated by a "wind."

There was no occasion for annihilating the waters. They returned to the place from whence they came. And as to the *wind* which God caused to pass over the earth, it was not intended merely to *evaporate*, but, like that which moved upon the chaos at the creation, to separate the waters from the earth, and carry them down to their former habitation. We have no adequate idea, perhaps, of this element the air, and of what mighty things it can effect, when employed in full force by its Creator.

Page 8. "It seems strange, that so vast an assem-"blage of animals could be enclosed in an *ark*, or "*chest*."

—But why, *chest*? The Hebrew word is used only for this ark of Noah, and that in which the child Moses was committed to the Nile; both hollow vessels, constructed to float upon the waters. But

[z] ארבות.

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there was something pleasant in the notion of the whole animal world being shut up in a *chest;* and the temptation was not to be resisted.

—" Which had but one window (which window " was kept shut for more than five months), without " being stifled for want of air."

All this, the infidels say, " seems strange." It does so; but it is not more *strange* than *true.* That air would be necessary to support the life of the creatures enclosed in the ark, was as well known to him who enjoined it to be built, as it can be to them. Our conclusion therefore is, that either a proper supply of it was conveyed in some manner from without, or else the air within, by means natural or preternatural, was preserved in a state fit for respiration. There might be various contrivances in and about the ark, which are not mentioned in so concise a history. The general facts, of which it concerned us to be informed, are these two; that the world was destroyed by a flood; and that one family, with a number of animals sufficient to replenish the earth, was preserved in a vessel constructed for that purpose.

It is asked farther, how the small family in the ark could give due attendance to the wants of so many creatures; and how the carnivorous animals were supplied with food proper for them.

Many more questions of a like kind might easily be asked, if one were to set one's wits to work upon the subject. But it should be considered, that the author who relates this transaction, relates it to have been carried on under the immediate direction and in-

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spection of God. By divine power the creatures were brought to Noah, and the fierce dispositions of the wild kind overruled and mollified, that they might live quietly and peaceably with one another, and with those of the tame sort, for the time appointed. Otherwise, instead of asking how they were taken care of and fed in the ark, it should first have been asked how they came into it, or stayed a single moment in it, before the flood began.—When "the wolf thus dwelt with "the lamb, the lion might *eat hay* like the ox." We should not recur to miracles upon every occasion; but if the event under consideration took place at all, it must, from the very nature of it, have been miraculous, and out of the common course, as it is said to have been. Some means of preserving the *fish* might therefore be provided by their Maker, notwithstanding the dilemma to which the learned and respectable writer above mentioned hath reduced us: "The water at the "deluge," says he, "was either fresh, or salt: now "the sea-fish could not have lived in the for-"mer, nor the river-fish in the latter."—Close and clever!

Page 9. It is argued in the eighth section, that according to the laws of *reflection* and *refraction*, established in the system of nature, the phenomenon of the *rainbow* must have been produced, as at present, in certain circumstances, from the beginning of the world; and therefore could not have been first set in the cloud, as a token of God's covenant with man, after the flood.

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But do the words necessarily imply, that the rainbow had never appeared before? Rather, perhaps, the contrary. The following paraphrase of the passage is submitted, as a just and natural one. "When, "in the common course of things, I bring a cloud "over the earth, under certain circumstances, I do "set my bow in it. That bow shall be from hence-"forth a token of the covenant I now make with "you to drown the earth no more by a flood. Look "upon it, and remember this covenant. As cer-"tainly as the bow is formed, by the operation of "physical causes, in the cloud, and as long as it con-"tinues to be thus formed, so certainly and so long "shall my covenant endure, standing fast for ever-"more, as this faithful witness in heaven." Jacob, we are told[a], "took a stone, and set it up for a "pillar, and said, This pillar be witness." God, in like manner (if we may so express it), "took the rain-"bow, and said, This bow be witness." Neither the stone nor the rainbow were new created for the purpose. When the Jews behold the rainbow, they bless God, who remembers his covenant, and is faithful to his promise. And the tradition of this its designation to proclaim comfort to mankind was strong among the heathen; for according to the mythology of the Greeks, the *rainbow* was the daughter of *Wonder*, "a sign to mortal men[b]," and regarded, upon its appearance, as the messenger of the celestial deities. Can we any where find a more striking in-

[a] Gen. xxxi. 45, 52.

[b] Τερας μεροπων ανθρωπων. Hom.

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stance of the sublime, than in the following short description of it? "Look upon the rainbow, and "praise him who made it: very beautiful it is in the "brightness thereof: it compasseth the heaven "about with a glorious circle; and the hands of the "Most High have bended it!"

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LETTER XIII.

PAGE 10. "What answer shall we give to those "who are inclined to deny, that an all-powerful and "just God could make use of the most unjustifiable "means to attain his great purpose of aggrandizing "the posterity of Abraham?"

The answer, without doubt, must be, either that the means in question (all circumstances duly known and considered) were not unjustifiable; or, that they were used by man, and only *permitted* by God. For men often make use of means to attain their own purposes, by which they unwittingly become the instruments of carrying into execution the counsels of God; yet are they not hereby justified in the use of such means. All the actions of holy men of old, related in Scripture, are not to be deemed blameless, because related in *Scripture*, or because related of *them;* though there may often have been circumstances, imperfectly known at this distance of time, which rendered them less blameable than they now appear to be; and therefore they are not to be judged of without great caution and circumspection. These, perhaps, are in no instances more necessary, for that reason, to be observed, than in reviewing those parts of sacred story, which

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relate to the *birthright* and *blessing* of the ancient patriarchs.

Ibid. "Could this benevolent and just Being approve of the ungenerous advantage which Jacob took over his faint and hungry brother?"

That the crime of Esau, in being so ready to part with his birthright, was of a more atrocious nature than at first sight it may seem to have been, is evident from the remark subjoined in the narrative; "thus Esau *despised* his birthright;" as also from his being stigmatized by St. Paul with an epithet denoting *profaneness* and *impiety*, qualities which were therefore manifested in the act of lightly and wantonly parting with the birthright, and those high and heavenly privileges annexed to it—I say, *lightly* and *wantonly;* because, though he returned faint and hungry from the field, there could be no danger of his *starving* in his father's house. He parted with it, as men often do now, for the sake of gratifying a liquorish appetite towards that which was his brother's, "for one morsel of meat," one particular dish, which he vehemently affected. There was no reason why a privilege thus rejected should be again conferred. Like the Jews, in an instance somewhat similar, he "judged himself unworthy." He cast it from him, and it became another's. With regard to the part borne by Jacob, in buying what Esau was thus ready to sell, there seems no necessity for pronouncing him faultless. The fact is related, like many others, without approbation or censure; and the designs of God were accomplished by the

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free agency of man. To his own master he standeth or falleth, respecting this and every other action of his life.

Ibid. "Could this omnipotent and upright Spirit "adopt no method of distinguishing his favourite "Jacob, but that of fraud and lies, by which he de-"prived the same unsuspecting brother of his fa-"ther's blessing?"

The following considerations may assist in directing us to form a right judgement of this matter.

1st. The proposition of deceiving Isaac originated not with Jacob, but with Rebeccah. Jacob remonstrated against it, as likely to bring a curse upon him, rather than a blessing; nor would consent to perform his part, till she engaged to take all the blame on herself—"On me be thy curse, my son; only "obey my voice."

2dly. From this speech, and from the earnestness and solicitude discovered by Rebeccah, it may not unfairly be presumed, that she had some special reason for what she did; that Isaac was about to take a wrong step in a concern of great moment, which ought to be prevented, and could be prevented by no other means.

3dly. The rectitude of Rebeccah's judgement seems evidently to have been recognized and allowed by Isaac, at the conclusion of the matter. For though he had blessed Jacob, intending to bless Esau, yet, as if recollecting himself, he confirmed and ratified that blessing in the strongest terms: "Yea, and he shall be blessed." Still far-

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ther—at sending him away, he again repeated the benediction, in the most solemn and affecting manner; "God give thee the blessing of Abraham!" It is hard to assign any other reason, why, if so disposed, upon discovering the fraud, he might not have reversed the proceeding. Nay, by the kind meeting of the brothers afterwards, one should be inclined to suppose, that Esau himself acquiesced at length in the propriety of what had been done.

4thly. If such were the case, Isaac was only deceived into what was right, and what himself acknowledged to be so in the conclusion. The deception was like those often practised by physicians for the benefit of their patients; and casuists must decide upon it in the same manner. The offence of Jacob is certainly alleviated, if not entirely taken off, by the circumstance of Rebeccah pledging herself to bear the blame; as the conduct of Rebeccah seems justified by that of Isaac ratifying and confirming to Jacob the blessing originally intended for Esau. Upon the whole, if there were an offence, it was one that might be forgiven; and if God, notwithstanding, continued to bless Jacob, he did forgive it, and had reasons for so doing.

Ibid. "In short, how shall we justify God for "the continual distinction he is said to have be-"stowed on a people, who from their own annals "appear to have been unparalleled for cruelty, in-"gratitude, inurbanity, &c.?"

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The article of *cruelty*, for proof of which we are referred, in a note, to the acts of Joshua, may be deferred till we come professedly to consider those acts. Their *ingratitude* towards God their Saviour was indeed flagrant; but perhaps might be matched *elsewhere*. As to the charge of *inurbanity*, it was brought against them by Voltaire, who spake of them as a "wretched nation, ever ignorant, and vul-"gar, and strangers to the arts." The following reply was made to him. When the infidels shall have duly considered it, we shall hope to be favoured with their sentiments upon it.

"Does it become you, a writer of the eighteenth "century, to charge the ancient Hebrews with igno-"rance?—a people who, while your barbarous an-"cestors, whilst even the Greks and Latins, wan-"dering in the woods, could scarcely procure for "themselves clothing and a settled subsistence, al-"ready possessed all arts of necessity, and some of "mere pleasure; who not only knew how to feed "and rear cattle, till the earth, work up wood, "stone, and metals, weave clothes, dye wool, em-"broider stuffs, polish and engrave on precious "stones, but who, even then, adding to manual arts "those of taste and refinement, surveyed land, ap-"pointed their festivals according to the motions of "the heavenly bodies, and ennobled their solemni-"ties by the pomp of ceremonies, by the sound of "instruments, music, and dancing; who even then "committed to writing the history of the origin of "the world, that of their own nation, and their ances-

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" tors; who had poets and writers skilled in all the
" sciences then known, great and brave commanders,
" a pure worship, just laws, a wise form of govern-
" ment; in short, the only one of all ancient nations,
" that has left us authentic monuments of genius and
" of literature. Can this nation be justly charged
" with *ignorance* and *inurbanity*?"

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LETTER XIV.

PAGE 11. "Unbelievers affirm, that a just God "could not punish Pharaoh for a hardness of "heart of which he himself (God) was evidently the "cause."

When we meet with an assertion apparently contrary to all the truth and equity in the world, it is but common justice to any writer, human or divine, to suppose, that we mistake his meaning, and that the expression employed to convey it is capable of an interpretation different from that which may at first present itself. We cannot, for a moment, imagine, that God secretly influences a man's will, or suggests any wicked stubborn resolution to his mind, and then punishes him for it. We are therefore to consider, by what other means, not incompatible with his nature and attributes, he may be said, in a certain sense, and without impropriety, to harden a man's heart.

There are many ways by which we may conceive this effect to be wrought, without running into the absurdity and impiety above-mentioned. The heart may be hardened by those very respites, miracles, and mercies, intended to soften it; for if they do not soften it, they will harden it—God is sometimes said to do that which he permits to be done by

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others, in the way of judgement and punishment; as when his people rejected his own righteous laws, he is said to have "given them" the idolatrous ones of their heathen neighbours, "statutes that were not "good."—The heart may be hardened by his withdrawing that grace it has long resisted; men may be given up to a reprobate mind; as they *would* not see when they possessed the faculty of sight, the use of that faculty may be taken from them, and they may be abandoned to blindness. But all this is judicial, and supposes previous voluntary wickedness, which it is designed to punish. The case of Pharaoh is exactly that of the Jews. God is said to have "blinded their "eyes, and hardened their hearts." But how? As it is here represented? Would he do this to his own people? Was HE the cause of their rejecting their Messiah; or does he—can he—intend to SAY that he was so?—Let us hear no more of this, for the sake of common sense and common honesty, if such things are yet left among us.

But it is asserted that, when the objection is urged by unbelievers, "we (Christians) usually answer, that "the potter has power over the clay, to fashion it as "he lists;" to which the infidels in the gaiety of their hearts triumphantly reply, that, "if the clay in "the hands of the potter were capable of happiness "and misery, according to the fashion impressed on "it, the potter must be malevolent and cruel, who "can give the preference to inflicting pain instead "of happiness."

The similitude of the *potter* is employed by St. Paul: but it does not stand exactly in his writings,

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as it does in the pamphlet before us. By him it is adduced in proof of one single point only, that, when men are become sinners, and obstinate sinners, God has a right of dealing with them according to his pleasure, and as may best answer the purposes of his dispensations, respecting others as well as themselves. The comparison is first used by God himself (Jer. xviii.), and applied to the power by him exercised of destroying or preserving an offending people, as they should either continue in sin, or repent and amend. It is applied precisely in the same manner by St. Paul (Rom. ix.), to show (as appears by the verses immediately following) that God might, without injustice, deal with the Jews as he had before dealt with a hardened Pharaoh; and for the same reason, because they had refused to hearken to his voice, as Pharaoh had done. He might reserve them for a more signal destruction, which would display his glory, and forward the conversion of the nations; while, at the same time, he showed the riches of his mercy to such, whether Jews or Gentiles, as embraced the Gospel; whom he owned as the spiritual seed of Abraham, and his peculiar people. Whoever will condescend with candour and attention to peruse Dr. Whitby's annotations on Rom. ix. cannot, I think, have the shadow of a doubt left on his mind, respecting either the drift of St. Paul's reasoning or the truth of it.

Page 12. "We know it is our duty to believe that "Aaron's miracle was performed by the power of "God; but we are at a loss to discover, by what "power the magicians performed theirs."

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It is a pleasure to me to find these gentlemen solicitous about the performance of their *duty;* and therefore, let me address to them a word of consolation and encouragement. Be not swallowed up by overmuch uneasiness, as touching this matter. Rest satisfied that whatever may be determined concerning the wonders wrought by the magicians, whether they are supposed to have been wrought in reality, or appearance only; by legerdemain, or the power of evil spirits, through the permission of God, willing to make his power known in this grand contest —either way, the argument drawn from miracles, in support of revelation, will remain in its full strength. The superiority of the God of Israel was manifested, and the contest yielded by the adversaries, who could not protect themselves or their friends from the maladies and plagues inflicted by omnipotence. Whatever the magicians did, or however they did it, it appeared evidently, they might as well have done nothing. Mankind can never be ensnared by pretences of this sort, when they see such pretences controlled and overruled by a superior power. You are men of too much sense, I am sure, to be found on the side of Jannes and Jambres, or to take a *retainer* from Simon Magus.

Page 13. "Where did the magicians find water to "practise their art upon, since Aaron had already "turned it all into blood?"

Not *all*, gentlemen, by your leave. The Egyptians not being able to drink of the water of the river, "digged round about it (as you are told[c]) for

[c] Exod. vii. 24.

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" water to drink." And, depend upon it, they found some, or it had been very bad with them indeed. But the truth is, that nothing is more common among writers, both sacred and profane, than the use of the word *all*, not in an *absolute*, but a *relative*, or *comparative* sense, as implying *many*, *some of all sorts*, &c, By adverting to this simple and obvious consideration, you might have spared yourselves the trouble of labouring in vain, through three or four pages, to be witty on the subject of Pharaoh's cattle being killed more than once, and such like pleasant conceits. These are poor *peddling* doings; but we shall have some *flashing*, by and by, to make amends.

Page 15. "Some weak believers are in doubt, " whether so mean, so ungenerous, and so dishonest " an act, as borrowing the jewels of the Egyptians, " without any intention of returning them, did not " rather originate in that disposition, which charac- " terizes the Jews to this day, than in the command " of the just God, who certainly could need no such " tricks to accomplish his intentions."

Much reason have we to wish, that some one among the unbelievers would take the pains to acquire a moderate stock of Hebrew, that so he " might have to give," upon such occasions as these " to him that needeth." For that the Isralites, in the proper sense of the English word, *borrowed* these jewels, or gave the Egyptians reason to expect a *return* of them, does by no means appear from the original, to which a man, when he is disposed to play the *critic* upon an author, should always have re-

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course, if he be solicitous to deserve the character of an honest man and a scholar. The general signification of the word[d] is to *ask*, to *require*, to *demand*. In the three texts[e] relative to this transaction, the Seventy[f], and in the two former, the Vulgate[g], render it by a term of similar import. It is said, "the Israelites *spoiled* the Egyptians;" they took these jewels, vessels, &c. and the Egyptians gave them, as the *spoil* of a conquered enemy, glad to escape with life, and to dismiss a much injured people; they took these spoils, as wages due, and withholden, for immense labour undergone; as a recompense for long and cruel oppression; some of them, probably, as *insignia* of the vanquished Egyptian deities, to be afterwards employed in the service of the true God, whom Egypt, as well as Israel, ought to have acknowledged and adored; who, as the great Lord and Proprietor of all things in heaven and earth, taketh from one, and giveth to another, according to his good pleasure, founded evermore in wisdom, truth, and righteousness; who at the beginning foretold[h] that the Egyptians should be spoiled, and when the time came, directed his people so to spoil them. "God gave them favour:" the act was his, and the Israelites were instruments only in his hands. If men are pleased to concern themselves at all with the history, they must take the whole as it stands, neither blaming those on whom no blame can properly fall, nor accusing their Maker of ini-

[d] שאל. [e] Exod. iii. 22. xi. 2. xii. 35. [f] Αιτεω.
[g] Postulo. [h] Exod. iii. 22.

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quity, who can be guilty of none, but at a future day, to the confusion of all his blasphemers, will be fully "justified in his saying, and clear when he is "judged."

One cannot but bless oneself to see how ready these writers are, at every turn, to give sentence against the people of God, in favour of their enemies; as if they emulated the fame of a set of worthies in the fifth century, called *Cainites;* who, having reprobated the Saviour of the world, his prophets, and apostles, are said to have adopted into the catalogue of their saints, and paid especial honours to the memories of—Cain, Korah, Dathan, Esau, the Sodomites, and Judas Iscariot.

As to their intimation, at page 17, that, because Egypt was a country intersected by canals, there never were any *horses* or *chariots* in it; they ought for this to take their part in the next general flogging at Westminster school. During the operation, perhaps, the captain of the school will be enjoined by the master to read aloud the following short passage from Rollin's Ancient History: "Foot, Horse, "and Chariot-races were performed in Egypt with "wonderful agility, and the world could not show "better horsemen than the Egyptians[1]."

In the next letter we shall proceed to the consideration of a topic entirely *new*—BALAAM'S ASS.

[1] Vol. i. p. 48.

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LETTER XV.

The first difficulty here is, "Why God should be "angry with Balaam for going, when he had given "him leave to go?"

To be sure, all circumstances continuing the same, it would be strange—it would be passing strange. But if circumstances varied, the divine conduct might vary too. "Go," says God, "but" —observe—"the word which I shall say unto thee, "that shalt thou do[k]." Balaam seems to have set out with a resolution to obey; for like a man, and like an honest man, he had boldly and nobly said, "If Balak would give me his house-full of silver "and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the "Lord my God, to do less or more[l]." However, it is possible that, upon the road, either by the persuasive arguments of the princes of Moab who accompanied him, or by the wicked suggestions of his own deceitful heart, an alteration had taken place in his mind, and interest had gained the ascendant over duty. I say, this is *possible*: considering his character, it is *probable*: but a passage in the history itself seems to make it *certain*. "I went "out to withstand thee, because thy *way* is *perverse*

[k] Numb. xxii. 20. [l] Ibid. xxii. 18.

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"before me[m]." But what *way?* Not merely his journey, for he had leave to take it conditionally. *Way* must necessarily be understood in its *moral* acceptation. Something was wrong in the *course* of his thoughts, his imaginations, in his design and intention, now changed from what they were at setting out. "The foolishness (or wickedness) of "man PERVERTETH his WAY[n]." Therefore God was angry, not, as it is in our translation, "because "he went[o];" but "as he was going—while he was "on the road[p]." Upon Balaam's humbling himself, and offering to return, leave of proceeding is again granted, but with a significant repetition of the original proviso: "Only the word that I shall "speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak[q]"—"Go, "on; but remember, to me your heart is open, your "desires are known. If you betray your trust, the "drawn sword of the angel waits to punish your "duplicity as it ought to be punished." This appears to be a fair and reasonable solution of the first difficulty.

As to the second, it is observed, page 17, that "the ass exhibited a specimen of penetration and "prudence, of which the asses of modern times "seem to be divested."

The observation brings to my mind one made upon the subject some years ago, by that father of the faithless, Dr. Tindal. "What a number of ideas

[m] Numb. xxii. 32.
[n] Prov. xix. 3.
[o] Numb. xxii. 22.
[p] כי חולך
[q] Ver. 35.

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"must Balaam's ass have (says he) to be able to "reason with her master, when she saw and knew "an angel[r]?" Will these gentlemen do me the favour to accept Dr. Waterland's answer?—"Now, "as to the number of ideas which the ass must "have; I believe she had as many as asses com-"monly have: and he may please to count them at "his leisure, for his own amusement[s]." If they have ever an anatomist among them, I dare say he could very easily demonstrate, from the configuration of its organs, the impossibility of the creature's speaking at all. And his demonstration would be just as much to the purpose, as Tindal's question. The plain truth is this: if it pleased God to take "this particular method of rebuking the prophet's "madness[t]," the severest philosophy cannot question his power to produce sounds articulate and significant, either *with* the organs of any animal, or *without* them. A voice proceeding from a dumb creature was made, upon this occasion, to teach a lesson similar to that deduced, upon another, from the example of the same creature: "The ox knoweth his owner, "and the ass his master's crib; but man doth not "know—a prophet doth not consider[u]." If it be objected, that the occasion was not worthy; that it was not *dignus vindice nodus;* we shall certainly take the liberty to think that God Almighty was a much better judge of that matter than the infidels can possibly be, even were they ten times wiser than they are. The whole transaction, in which Balaam

[r] Christianity as old, &c. p. 254.
[s] Scripture Vindicated, 4. 42.
[t] 2 Pet. ii. 16.
[u] See Isa. i. 3.

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bore so conspicuous a part, is of very great moment, and the history which relates it, full of deep instruction, as well as abounding in the beautiful and sublime[x].

A predecessor of these gentlemen, Mr. Chubb, I remember, called the Supreme Being to a very severe account for his conduct respecting the Canaanites; and they seem disposed to do the same, in a bitter, sarcastical, canting section, page 19, &c. the drift of which is to compare the Israelites in Canaan to the Spaniards in Mexico, and represent the former as the more detestable people of the two. The objection will perhaps be obviated, and its futility evinced, by proposing the few following queries:

1st. Has not the Almighty a sovereign right over the lives and fortunes of his creatures?

2dly. May not the iniquity of nations become such, as to justify him in destroying those nations?

3dly. Is he not free to choose the instruments by which he will effect such destruction?

4thly. Is there more injustice or cruelty in his effecting it by the *sword*, than by famine, pestilence, whirlwind, deluge, or earthquake?

5thly. When these latter means are employed, do not women, children, and cattle, perish with the men?

6thly. Does not God take away thousands of children every day, and perhaps more than half the species, under ten years of age?

[x] "Nihil habet Poesis Hebræa in ullo genere limatius aut exquisitius." LOWTH de Sacra Poesi Heb. Præl. xx. ad fin.

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7thly. Does not the circumstance of a divine commission entirely alter the state of the case, and distinguish the Israelites from the Spaniards, as much as a warrant from the magistrate distinguishes the executioner from the murderer?

8thly. May not men be assured of God's having given them such a commission?

9thly. Were not the Israelites thus assured; and is there not at this day incontestable evidence upon record, that they were so?

This is a fair and regular distribution of the subject into its several parts. Whenever the infidels shall find themselves in a humour to discuss all or any of them, we must consider what they may offer farther upon this topic.

Page 18. They cite the following passage from Judges, i. 19. "The Lord was with Judah, and "he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain: "but could not drive out the inhabitants of the val-"ley, because they had chariots of iron." They subjoin: "It is difficult to conceive how the Lord of "heaven and earth, who had so often changed the "order, and suspended the established laws of na-"ture, in favour of his people, could not succeed "against the inhabitants of a valley, because they "had chariots of iron!"

At the end of this sentence is placed only a single note of admiration. There ought to have been at least half a dozen; for never was any thing more truly wonderful! The "difficulty of conceiving it" is very great indeed! so great, that one should have thought, for very pity's sake, our adversaries would

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have looked about them a little, to see whether they understood the text, and whether there were no possible way of bringing us off. As they have not been kind enough to do it for us, we must e'en try what we can do for ourselves.

We apprehend, then, in the first place, that when it is said, "HE drove out the inhabitants of the "mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants "of the valley;" the antecedent is *Judah*, not *Jehovah;* because Jehovah had often displayed much more eminent instances of his power; and he that effected the greater, could certainly have effected the less. In the second place, though it pleased God to give success to Judah in one instance, it does not necessarily follow, that therefore he should give it in all. So that there is no more absurdity in the passage, than there would be in the following speech, if such had been addressed to the sovereign by one of his commanders returned from America: "By the "blessing of God upon your majesty's arms, we "overcame general Greene in the field; but we "could not attack general Washington, because he "was too strongly intrenched in his camp." There is no reason, therefore, for supposing, that "the Jews "considered the God of Israel their protector as a "local divinity; who was in some instances more, "and in others less powerful, than the gods of their "enemies[7]."

Nor is it altogether "THUS that David in many "places compares the Lord with other gods:" since

[7] Page 19.

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he compares him *with* them, only to set him *above* them; as sufficiently appears by the passage quoted: "The Lord is a great God, and a great king above "*all gods*[z]." In the heathen world there were "gods many, and lords many." An Israelite acknowledged one only God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all the supposed deities that were therein. "All the gods of the heathen (so styled by "them) are but idols; but it is the Lord that made "the heavens."

Such, as an Israelite, must have been the sentiments of Jephthah, as well as David; and therefore the citation from his address to the king of the Ammonites will avail nothing to the purpose for which it is adduced: "Wilt thou not possess that, which "Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So "whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out "from before us, them will we possess[a]." It cannot be seriously thought that Jephthah, a judge in Israel, intended to acknowledge the real divinity of the Ammonitish idol, Chemosh. No: the argument is evidently of the kind which logicians style *argumentum ad hominem*, an argument formed upon the principles of the adversaries, and therefore conclusive to *them*. "You deem yourselves entitled to "any possession acquired, as you imagine, by the "assistance of him whom you call your god, and can-"not reasonably expect us to yield that which we "know the Lord our God has awarded to us." Jephthah, in a negotiation with the Ammonites, had

[z] Page 19. [a] Judg. xi. 24.

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no occasion to discuss the subject of their idolatry, or tell them what he thought of Chemosh; but states the matter according to their own ideas, supposing them, for a moment, to be true, though he believed them to be false; as is done every day.

Voltaire has amused himself much with this text, and between one and another of his manifold publications, kept it up like a shuttle-cock. He struggles hard for it—but in vain. "The words of Scripture," says he, "are not, *Thou thinkest thou hast a right* "*to possess*, &c. but expressly, *Thou hast a right to* "*possess*, &c. for that is the true interpretation of "the Hebrew words, *otho thirasch*[b]." Ay, my little man, so it is, according to the *Vulgate*—"Ti-"bi jure debentur." But any modern schoolboy would have informed thee better, and told thee, that the words, in very deed, denote neither more nor less than, "Thou wilt possess it." Are we to give up our Bible, and pin our faith upon the sleeve of such a man as this?

After Balaam's Ass, the Canaanites, and Chemosh, one naturally expects—and lo, she is at hand—

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

It was not unusual among us here in England some years ago, for an old woman, if she had the misfortune to live at the corner of a common, to be suspected of witchcraft, and tossed into a horsepond, to see whether she would sink or swim. To put an

[b] את תירש Treatise on Toleration, chap. xii.

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end to such ridiculous barbarities, as well as some others of a more serious and solemn kind, the legislature of Great Britain very wisely ordained, by an Act of 9 G. II. ch. 5. that no person should in future be vexed or prosecuted under that notion; and that whoever pretended to any thing of the kind, should, on conviction, be adjudged to the pillory. These gentlemen have their fears upon this occasion, for the authority of the Bible. I cannot say, for my part, that I feel any such apprehensions.

Page 23. "The witch of Endor and the Jewish "law, both prove by divine argument (whatever "that may be), the existence of such professors, "though, like miracles, they have now ceased to "appear."

But the non-existence of miracles at present is no proof that they never existed; for they most certainly once did exist, if evidence be evidence. The argument therefore is full in their own teeth; and there might be witches, as well as possessed persons, formerly, though there may be none now. The Bible may yet be true, and (blessed be God) the parliament not *infidel*. They "deplore the infidelity of "*that* parliament." Bold words these, indeed! I would not have said such things of *any* parliament, for the world—They are apprehensive of persecution —Let them take care another time.

It appears by the Jewish law, that there were then men and women, who, in the language of our translation, are styled "diviners, observers of times, en-"chanters, witches, charmers, consulters with fami-

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"liar spirits, wizards, and necromancers[c]." These practices are said to be "the abominations of the "*heathen*[d];" and we know they were continued, lower down, among the Greeks and Romans, whose philosophers were sometimes puzzled how to determine concerning them. With the idolatry of their neighbours the Israelites frequently adopted these its appendages. That there was in them *much* of juggling and imposture, may be true; but that *all* was so, is more than many wise and learned men have thought proper, upon a due consideration of the matter, to assert; because, that there are no evil spirits, or that mankind never had any communication with them, are negatives, not easily proved.

Respecting the transaction at Endor, the case, in few words, stands thus. Convinced by proper evidence of the authority of the book in which it is related, we of course believe (having, as we judge, good reason to believe), that the several incidents happened as they are there said to have happened. By what power or agency they were brought about, or how the business was conducted, is another question, which we must endeavour to solve, if we can do it; if not, it must remain as it is, being confessedly to us, at this distance, of an obscure and difficult nature.

That God should permit evil spirits, employed by a wretched woman, to summon, at pleasure, his departed servants from the other world, is not to be

[c] Deut. xviii. 10. [d] Ver. 9. 12.

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imagined. It remains, therefore, either that the whole affair of Samuel's appearance was a contrivance: or that, by the interposition of God, there was a real appearance, which the enchantress did not expect, nor could have effected. The surprise and alarm occasioned in her seem to point us this way, and there are two instances recorded in Scripture of a proceeding somewhat similar.

When king Balak had recourse to sorceries and divinations, hoping to procure some relief, or fair promises at least, from them, God himself interposed, and so overruled Balaam and all his divinations, that Balak could obtain no favourable answer from them, but quite the reverse [e].

In like manner, when king Ahaziah had sent to consult Baalzebub, the demon of Ekron, to know whether he should recover of the sickness he then lay under, hoping, no doubt, to obtain a favourable answer there, as probably he might have done; God himself took care to anticipate the answer by Elijah, the prophet, who assured the messengers, meeting them by the way, that their master Ahaziah should not recover, but should surely die [f].

Thus, probably, was it in the case of Saul: when he hoped for a kind answer from Samuel, and, it is likely, would have had a very favourable one from some *pretended* Samuel, God was pleased to disappoint both the sorceress and him, by sending the *true* Samuel, with a true and faithful message, quite contrary to what the woman and Saul had expected:

[e] Numb. xxiii. [f] 2 Kings, i. 4.

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which so confounded and disordered him, that he instantly fell into a swoon, and could no longer bear up against the bitter agonies of his mind.

The sense of the Jewish church, about three hundred years before Christ, is given by the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, when, speaking of Samuel, he says thus: "After his death he prophesied, and "showed the king his end, and lifted up his voice "from the earth in prophecy, to blot out the wicked-"ness of the people[g]." This author plainly enough supposed that it was Samuel himself who appeared in person, and prophesied to king Saul.

[g] Ecclus. xlvi. 20.

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LETTER XVI.

We come now to some observations on the character and conduct of David. And here, the extracts are more scanty than one should have expected, from *Messrs. Bayle, Morgan, and Co.* or rather from the last retailer of this kind of ware, the *Historian of the man after God's own heart.*

Page 21. David is scoffed at for his cruelty towards the Ammonites, shown by "putting them under saws and under harrows of iron[h], &c."

Whatever the words in the original may signify, it seems but reasonable to conclude, that if David inflicted on these people punishments extraordinarily severe, there must have been an extraordinary cause. We read in the book of Judges, that the men of Judah "pursued after Adonibezek, and caught him, "and cut off his thumbs and his great toes." Had nothing more been related, this would have appeared a strange instance of savage and wanton barbarity. But what says the suffering prince himself? "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great "toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; "as I have done, so God hath requited me[i]." The cruelties practised by the Ammonites upon others

[h] 2 Sam. xii. 29. [i] Judg. i. 6, 7.

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might be returned, by the just judgement of Heaven, upon themselves. There is no ground for supposing that David treated them worse than they would have treated the Hebrews, or than prisoners of war were treated in those times: and Dr. Chandler, it is apprehended, has given very good reasons why the passage should be rendered in the manner following: "He brought forth the inhabitants, and put them to "the saw, and to iron mines, and iron axes, and "transported them to the brick-kiln," or rather "to "the brick-frame and hod, to make and carry "bricks;" that is, he reduced them to slavery, and put them to the most servile employments. See Chandler's Life of David, vol. ii. p. 227.—a book, which should be carefully perused by those who are disposed to favour us with any fresh disquisitions on the subject of it. But we must proceed to David's sentence on the Amalekite.

The two accounts of the manner of Saul's death, one given in the course of the history, at the close of the first book of Samuel, the other by the Amalekite, at the beginning of the second, are so different, that "one of them (the infidels say, page 26), must be "false." Very well; suppose it so to be, and what then? Why then, they put the following resolution of the difficulty into the mouth of their Tom Fool of a *Christian*, as they call him. "To this *we* can only "answer, *as it becomes the faithful* in all such cases "of seeming contradiction; namely, that they were "both written by the pen of inspiration, conse-"quently must both be true, however contradictory

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"or absurd they may seem to mere human reason."—Well said, Tom!

But let me ask these gentlemen, what mortal, besides themselves, Tom's elder brethren, ever imagined the Amalekite to have been *inspired*, when he told his story to David?—an idle pickthank fellow, who stripped Saul of his diadem and bracelets, and ran away full speed with them to David, to let him know that all was safe, his old enemy was fallen, and *he* had put him out of his pain! David saw through the character of the man, and, from his forward officiousness in the affair, probably concluded he had taken some undue advantage of Saul in his wounded state, and slain him, on purpose that he might find favour with his successor in the kingdom by bringing him all this good news. "As the Lord liveth who hath "redeemed my soul out of all adversity," says he, upon another occasion, "when one told me, saying, "'Behold Saul is dead,' *thinking to have brought* "*good tidings*, I took hold of him, and slew him in "Ziklag, *who thought that I would have given him* "*a reward for his tidings*[k]."

But whether David suspected it or not, as the narrative of Saul's death given in the course of the history is true, the story told by the Amalekite is certainly false in some particulars, which are inconsistent with that narrative. Nay, it is not probable, if indeed it be possible, that the main circumstance of all should have been true.—Saul desires his armour-bearer to kill him, who refuses; he falls upon

[k] 2 Sam. iv. 9, 10.

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his sword; and the servant, seeing his master dead, does the same. Now, where is the interval, or opening, for the scene between Saul and the Amalekite to take place? Or would the armour bearer, who refused to kill Saul, stand by, and suffer an *Amalekite* to kill him? But though David judged this man unworthy to be *his* friend, he may make a very good figure in the unbeliever's catalogue of *saints*, and I would recommend him to occupy a niche in that temple.

Let us, however, for a moment, suppose, that David had judged otherwise; that he had rewarded him handsomely, and promoted him to honour. What would have been said, *then?* Why, that poor Saul had escaped the sword of the Philistines, but "this ruffian," (such is the courtly appellation bestowed upon David[1],) had employed an assassin to dispatch him, during the hurry and confusion of the retreat! O it had been a delicious morsel, exactly seasoned to the palate of infidelity!

Page 27. The infidels are much disconcerted, it seems, about *the book of Jasher:* it was extant previous to the writing of the book of Joshua, and was not finished till after the accession of David to the throne of Israel; so that, as they apprehend, either the author of Jasher must have lived upwards of four hundred years, or the book of Joshua was not written till after the time of David.

Here again, a little Hebrew would have done us no harm. It does not appear that *Jasher* was the

[1] Page 25.

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name of an individual, or that the book so styled was all written in the same age by the same man. The transactions of the times were regularly entered in a public register, by a person denominated the *Recorder*, or *Historiographer*, a stated officer to the Jewish kings[m]. And *the book of Jasher* was the *standard authentic* book, in which they were so entered by authority, and from which extracts were made, as occasion required[n].

Page 29. Some difficulties are started relative to the history of David numbering the people.

In our translation we read, 2 Sam. xxiv. that "*the Lord* moved David to number Israel;" and, 1 Chron. xxi. that "*Satan* moved him to do it."

Nothing is more common with the sacred writers, than to represent God as doing that which, in the course of his providence, and for the purposes either of mercy or judgement, he permits to be done by the instrumentality of second causes, animate or inanimate, corporeal or spiritual. In the case of Ahab, 1 Kings, xxii. he is represented, after the manner of men, and in condescension to our capacities, as a king keeping his court, with spirits of all kinds in waiting before him, prepared to execute his will upon earth. One of these spirits is commissioned to in-

[m] מוכיר See 2 Sam. viii. 16. 1 Kings, iv. 3. 2 Kings, xviii. 18. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8.

[n] Le Clerc seems to have imagined that this record was kept in verse: "Crediderim *Librum Recti* fuisse collectionem *hymnorum* "aut *carminum* de rebus gestis Hebræorum, forte non uno tem-"pore factum." Cler. in Josh. x. 13. We read, indeed, of psalms and proverbs, *which the men of Judah copied out.*

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fluence the false prophets, and they persuade Ahab, who will not listen to the true prophet of God. Taking the matter, therefore, as it stands in our English translation, the import of both passages laid together, according to a fair explanation, would evidently be, that, for good and sufficient reasons known to himself, God permitted Satan to tempt, and David to yield to the temptation, in this instance.

But if we consult the original, we shall find there is no necessity to suppose that David was excited either by God or by Satan. The word *Satan*, though often denoting that person who is emphatically styled THE *Adversary*, signifies only, in general, AN *Adversary;* and therefore the passage 1 Chron. xxi. may very properly be rendered, "*An* "adversary stood up against Israel, and excited "David. This adversary might be some counsellor, or &c. The other passage, 2 Sam. xxiv. may as properly be translated, "The anger of the "Lord was kindled against Israel, and *one excited* "*David*," or "*David was excited by some one*" (the person mentioned in Chronicles), saying, "Go, num- "ber Israel."

Of the different kinds of punishment offered to David for his choice, upon this occasion, one is that of a famine for *seven* years, according to 2 Sam. xxiv. but for *three* years only, according to 1 Chron. xxi.

It has been observed by some learned men, that the year in which this happened was the *fourth* year since a famine had commenced on another occasion, mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 1. This circumstance considered, the question, as it is worded in one place—

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"Shall *seven* years of famine come unto thee in thy "land?" is tantamount to saying, "Wilt thou choose "*three additional years* of famine," &c. which removes the apparent contradiction.

It may be urged, that "the prophet delivered the "message no more than once, and therefore must "have said either *seven* or *three:* he could not have "said *both*."

True; but the sacred, like other historians, often relate the same conversation in different terms; that is, they give the sense and substance of what passed, varying the phraseology. Instances frequently occur in both Testaments.

If no other satisfactory solution of the difficulty could be assigned, candour and common sense surely would suppose, that the word *seven*, in 2 Sam. xxiv. was originally *three*, especially as *three* is the word in the Greek version of the Seventy[o].

But—"If David only sinned, why should the "punishment fall upon the *people?*"

Such is the union between king and people, like that between the head and the body, that this happens continually in the natural order of things; and therefore, why not judicially? What greater misfortune can befall a king, or a father, than the loss of his subjects, or his children? It is possible, however, that such might not be altogether the case, in the present instance; though David, like a true patriot king and most affectionate father, intercedes for his people, and desires to receive in his own person

[o] Τρια ετη.

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and family the stroke that was ready to descend on them: "I have sinned, and done wickedly: these "sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I "pray thee, be upon me, and upon my father's "house." Notwithstanding all this, I say, it should seem, that the people were by no means without fault. For the history opens thus: "The anger of "the Lord was kindled *against Israel*, and"—as a consequence of it—"David was excited to number "Israel."

But of what nature, then, after all, was this act of numbering the people, and why should it have been followed by a plague?

I am persuaded that we are much in the dark upon this point. If any light can be thrown upon it, that light must proceed from a passage in the book of Exodus, ch. xxx. 12. where God says to Moses, "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel "after their number, then shall they give every man "a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou "numberest them; that there be no plague among "them, when thou numberest them." To number the people, then, was not, as it should seem, merely to count them out of curiosity or vain glory. It was a religious rite, it was a muster, a review, a visitation, an inquisition into their conduct, into the religious and moral state in which they at that time stood before their God. For upon such inquisition something came out, or appeared against them, which required an offering, by way of atonement or ransom for their souls: "They shall give a ransom, that "there be *no plague amongst them, when thou num-*

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"*berest them.*" A very observable expression; for when David numbered them, this was the very thing that happened; *there was a plague among them*, in consequence of their *being numbered.* They might be in such a state, that God would not accept them, or their offerings. It is not improbable that they should be in such a state, if we consider what corruptions must needs creep in under Saul's wicked reign and David's long wars, during most of which time the country had been overrun by the Philistines, &c. who would propagate their idolatry, with its flagitious concomitants. In short, Israel had provoked God; for otherwise, his anger would not have been kindled against them, as we are informed that it was; their offences called for punishment, and, on the numbering of the people, an opportunity was taken to inflict it. Joab appears to have been aware of the consequence, as a known case. "Why," says he, "will my lord the king be a cause of punish-"ment, trespass, or forfeiture[p], to Israel?" as if he knew that, upon a visitation, they must be punished who should be found guilty; and was unwilling that the number of the king's subjects should be lessened. But David might think it necessary, and his zeal prevailed. Otherwise, it is extraordinary that such a man as Joab should see what David either could not or would not see.

This account of the transaction was offered to the public, many years ago, by a learned writer, well skilled in biblical knowledge and criticism. That it

[p] לאשמה I. Chron. xxi. 3.

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is entirely free from objection, or will solve all difficulties, is more, perhaps, than can be affirmed. But it is curious, and certainly deserves attention.

On the whole, to adopt the words of Dr. Chandler, "If they who object, credit the history of the "Old Testament in this part of it, and think it is "true, that one of these three plagues was offered "to David as the punishment of his offence; that he "chose the pestilence; that it came accordingly, and "was removed upon his intercession; they are as "much concerned to account for the difficulties of "the affair, as I or any other person can be. If "they do not believe this part of the history, as the "sacred writers represent it, let them give us the "account of it, as it stands in their own imagination; "and tell us, whether there was any plague at all, "how and why it came, and how it went and disappeared of a sudden."

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LETTER XVII.

A FEW more *doubts* remain, touching the *prophecies*, and some passages in the *New Testament*.

Page 39. "The great evangelical prophet could "foretel the downfall of Babylon by Cyrus, but "could not tell the name of the Messiah."

Who enabled him to foretel the downfall of Babylon by Cyrus?—"He might take the advantage "of writing that prophecy after the events took "place," say the infidels, page 40. But how so? Isaiah spake of Cyrus at least one hundred years before his birth. Had a *history* of Cyrus been among the books of Scripture, under the name of Isaiah, they would have placed the author, for longevity, in the same class with their friend *Jasher*.

"Isaiah could not tell the name of the Messiah." He could have told it, had it been communicated to him, as that of Cyrus was. He has described Messiah in a manner not to be mistaken. There might be very good reasons why the name was not declared beforehand. And as God did not see proper to do it, there certainly were such reasons.

But "if Christ were intended by the name *Im-* "*manuel*, the prophet was mistaken, for he was "never called by that name."

The first commentator one opens will inform one

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that, in Scripture language, to be *called* is the same as to *be*. Thus, of Messiah it is said, chap. ix. 6. "His name shall be called *Wonderful, Counsellor,*" &c. though he was never called by any of the names there enumerated; of the same person, Jer. xxiii. 6. "This is his name whereby he shall be called, *The* "*Lord our Righteousness;*" of Jerusalem, Isa. i. 26. "Thou shalt be called, *The city of righteousness.*" No man should presume to criticise a book, if he will not be at the pains to study the phraseology peculiar to it.

Page 40. "If the prophecies are evident and "clear, how happened it, that the whole Jewish na-"tion, together with the angel Gabriel, should mis-"take, and suppose the kingdom of Messiah to be "temporal?"

The angel Gabriel was certainly under no mistake upon this point, because of Christ he says expressly Luke i. 33. "He shall reign for ever, and of his "kingdom there shall be no end." And as to *the case of the Jews,* it is treated of at large in a discourse under that title, by the author before-mentioned, at page 173, to which these gentlemen are referred.

Page 40. "Could not those inspired writers, who "prophesied concerning things of no consequence, "as the thirty pieces of silver, and the casting lots "for Christ's garments, have predicted with equal "certainty the more important circumstance of his "death and resurrection?"

The death and resurrection of Christ are predicted in the strongest terms, Psal. xxii. cx. Isa. liii. And

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what can add more weight to this kind of evidence, than the prediction of particulars so minute and circumstantial as those of the thirty pieces, and the division of the garments by lot? One would think, at the contemplation of them, all infidelity would stop its mouth, instead of opening it.

Page 41. "In short, they beg to be shown a "single prophecy, concerning which divines are "agreed."

What Tully said of philosophers may be true perhaps of divines, considering the multitude of them that have lived from the days of the apostles to the present times; namely, that there never was an opinion, however absurd, which has not been maintained by some one or other. And therefore, to reject the evidence of prophecy, till all divines shall agree exactly about it, argues a conduct as wise in the infidels, as if they should decline sitting down to a good dinner, till all the clocks in London and Westminster struck four together.

Page 41. "They desire to know, why the Reve-"lation of St. John should be more obscure and "enigmatical than any which was written during the "typical and shadowy dispensation of Moses?"

Much valuable instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion may be gathered from the Revelation, in the most clear and perspicuous manner; witness the *Moral Reflections* on that book, by Pere Quesnelle. Of the predictions in the former part of it, many have been explained to general satisfaction; and others may be so explained hereafter, as by the studies and labours of different persons, the symbo-

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lical language of Scripture becomes better understood, and the events predicted are brought forward in their order. If sufficient reasons may be assigned why prophecy should be in some degree obscure for a time, they will hold with regard to those of the New, as well as those of the Old Testament. Let gentlemen bestow due attention on the evidences of Christianity so often set before them. When they shall thereby be happily induced to believe, it will be time enough to argue with them on such points as the obscurity of St. John's Revelation, and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is scoffed at in a very unbecoming manner, page 32.

Thus much for *prophecy*. We proceed to some objections against particular passages in the *New Testament*.

Of these, the first respects the difference between the genealogy of our Lord Christ as given by St. Matthew, and that given by St. Luke. On this subject let it be observed,

1st. That genealogies in general, and those of the Jews in particular, with their method of deriving them, and the confusion often arising from the circumstance of the same person being called by different names, or different persons by the same name, are in their nature, and must be to us, at this distance of time, matters of very complicated consideration, and it is no wonder they should be attended with difficulties and perplexities.

2dly. The evangelists, in an affair of so much importance, and so open then to detection, had there been any thing wrong to be detected, would most as-

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suredly be careful to give Christ's pedigree as it was found in the authentic tables, which, according to the custom of the nation, were preserved in the family, as is evident from Josephus, who says, "I "give you this succession of our family, as I find it "written in the public tables."

3dly. As it was well known the Messiah must descend from David, the genealogical tables of that family would be kept with more than ordinary diligence and precision.

4thly. Whatever cavils the modern Jews and others make now against the genealogies recorded by the evangelists, the Jews their contemporaries never offered to find fault with, or to invalidate the accounts given in the Gospels. As they wanted neither opportunity, materials, skill, nor malice, to have done it, and it would have offered them so great an advantage against the Christians, this circumstance alone, as Dr. South well remarks, were we not now able to clear the point, ought with every sober and judicious person to have the force of a moral demonstration.

Thus much premised, let us hear the objection.

Page 33. "Matthew reckons twenty-seven gene-"rations from David to Christ; Luke reckons forty-"two, and the names totally disagree. Matthew "traces the descent from Solomon, and Luke from "Nathan, both sons of David. According to our "feeble notions, twenty-seven cannot be equal to "forty-two, neither can Nathan be imagined to be "Solomon."

But were the objectors never informed that, in the

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opinion of those who have most considered this question, and were best qualified to consider it, St. Luke deduces the genealogy of our Saviour, not as St. Matthew does, on the side of Joseph, but on the side of Mary, who by Jews and Christians is agreed to have been the daughter of *Heli?* If therefore Jacob, according to St. Matthew, were Joseph's father by *nature*, Heli, who is said by St. Luke to have been his father, could only have been his *father-in-law*, by his marriage with Mary, the daughter of *Heli*, whose genealogy is then given by St. Luke; to show that every way Christ "sprang from Judah," as was EVIDENT (by the testimony of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) to all of that age; and that he was "of the seed of David;" his real mother, no less than his supposed father, being "of the "house and lineage of David."

Disputes may be raised and maintained to the end of the world on many other difficulties which occur in the two genealogies. "But those who are "acquainted with the customs of the Jews, know "there are many genealogies which *seem* repugnant, "and yet *are not* so. And that may happen various "ways, as may easily be proved from books which "the Jews and we jointly acknowledge. There are "several methods of reconciling these difficulties, "though it be often hard to say which is the best, at "the distance of so many ages, all records and "even memory of these things being utterly lost[q]."

[q] Dr. Trapp on the Gospels, page 82, second edition. See likewise Dr. South's seventh Sermon of his third volume, and Macknight's Harmony.

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I would gently admonish the infidels, if they touch upon this subject again, to behave with better manners than they have done in their thirty-fourth page.

The excellent Pascal has observed, as many others have done before and after him, that the evangelists, by differing in some things from each other, have afforded us a proof of their not having written in concert, and that such difference is so far an argument in their favour. The observation is sensible and just. Not so the inference drawn by the objectors, page 35, that therefore "contradiction in "evidence is a mark of truth." For Mr. Pascal did not allow, or suppose, any more than we do, that the evangelists, when rightly understood and explained, really contradicted each other. His words, as cited by themselves, are, "les *foiblesses* les plus APPA-"RENTES sont de *forces*, &c. This is a piece of coin from the mint of *Ferney*, and bears strongly impressed upon it the image and superscription of the coiner.

Page 35. "When Christ was baptized by John, "the heavens were opened, and a voice was heard, "declaring his divine origin; such a prodigy must "have awakened the attention of all Judea; yet we "find the historians totally silent."

What historians? A pagan historian would not concern himself with the report of a Jewish prodigy; nor would a Jewish historian have related a circumstance favourable to Christianity, unless he had himself become a Christian. But would any writer of common sense have hazarded the relation of such a fact, as having happened in the presence of a multitude of witnesses, if it never had so happened?

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Page 35. "It is strange that the horrid massacre "of the children by the command of Herod, should "be totally unnoticed by Josephus."

It was too nearly related to the birth of the wonderful child which occasioned it, and concerning which Josephus thought that questions might be asked. For otherwise, is it not equally *strange*, that he should be *totally silent* concerning the life and death of Christ, and the appearance of a new religion which had extended itself to Rome, and attracted the notice of the historians there? Yet, if the celebrated passage be an interpolation (as these gentlemen deem it to be), of such events has Josephus said nothing, though falling within a period, the transactions of which are by him minutely and exactly related. But though Josephus was silent, and had good reasons for being so, it evidently appears from the often cited passage of Macrobius, that Herod's slaughter of the infants in Judea was a thing well known in his time, and was not contested by heathens[r]. We may add, as in the case above, that St. Matthew must have been out of his senses to have told such a story as this, had it been otherwise than true; nor is there any thing in the character of Herod that renders it improbable. Quite the contrary.

As to the sneers upon *interpolations* and *pious frauds*, in page 36, I am sorry occasion has ever

[r] —"Inter pueros, *quos in Syriâ Herodes Rex Judæorum intra "bimatum jussit occidi.*"—Macrob. Saturnal. lib. ii. cap. 4. See at large on this subject Lardner's Credibility, Part I. b. ii. ch. 11. and Findlay against Voltaire, p. 541.

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been given for them. We want no such aids. *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.* I only wish that our adversaries, in their representations of the Scriptures and Christianity, were never guilty of *frauds* which are not quite so *pious.*

The purport, in few words, of all the parade and flourish, page 37, is this. "Our Lord and St. Paul "foretold the end of the world, as an event that "should happen in their time. It did not so happen; therefore they were under a mistake and "delusion."

Our Lord, Luke xxi. in that figurative and majestic style well understood by those who understand the language of Scripture, describes the destruction of the Jewish polity and system. The terms may and do apply to the end of the world, for this obvious reason, that the two events are in many instances parallel and analogous. His own declaration shows plainly of which he was primarily and immediately speaking: "This generation shall not "pass away, till all these things are fulfilled:" and the figures are those usually employed, in like cases, by the prophets of old.

The charge against St. Paul is founded solely on his use of the *first person;* 1 Thess. iv. 17. "*We* "who are alive and remain, shall be caught up to "meet the Lord in the air." But how common is it for us, when speaking of a society, an army, a nation, to which we belong, to say, *we* went, or came, or did such a thing, or *shall* do so and so; though we ourselves neither had, nor shall have any *personal* concern in the matter; though the event happened be-

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fore we were born, or is to happen after our decease? Thus in the Old Testament, Psal. lxvi. 6, "They went through the water—there did *we* re-"joice." Hos. xii. 4. "Jacob found God in Be-"thel; there he spake with *us*." By the terms "*we* "who are alive," the apostle means, doubtless, *those of us Christians* who shall then be alive. In another place, 2 Cor. iv. 14. he says, "We know that "he who *raised up* the Lord Jesus, shall raise up *us* "also." He could not believe contradictory propositions, that he should *die*, and that he should *not* die. But what is decisive upon the point, in the second epistle to the same Thessalonians, written only a few months after the first, he most earnestly admonishes them not to be *deceived*, as if by any thing that had fallen from him, either in speech or writing, they were to imagine "the day of God was at hand;" since the grand apostasy, and other events, which required much intervening time for their accomplishment, were first to take place in the world. See 2 Thess. ii. 2, 3. Nay, he reminds them, verse 5, that he told them as much, "while he was yet with "them;" that is, before either epistle was written.

Page 41. "How came it to pass that Christ "should curse a fig tree for being without fruit in "March; or be ignorant that it was not the season "for figs?"

1st. It is certain, in fact, that one sort of figs were ripe at that time of the year, namely, at the passover.

2dly. By the *season of figs* may be meant the season of *gathering figs*, as in Matth. xxi. 34.

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"When the time, "or season," of the fruit drew near," that is plainly, the time for *gathering* the fruit, "the "Lord of the vineyard sent his servants to receive "the fruit." If therefore one sort of figs was ripe about that time of the year, and yet the time for *gathering* them was not fully come, Christ might with reason expect to find fruit on the tree. In construing the passage thus interpreted, as Mr. Macknight observes, the latter clause might be joined with the words *he came if haply he might find any thing thereon*, and the intermediate words thrown into a parenthesis, thus: *He came if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves) for the time of figs*—of gathering figs—*was not yet*. "That this is the true construction," adds Mr. Macknight, "is plain, because the "evangelist is not giving the reason why there were "no figs on the tree, but the reason why Jesus ex-"pected to find some on it." He tells us, the season for gathering figs was not yet come, to show that none had been taken off the tree; and consequently, that having its whole produce upon it, there was nothing improper in Christ's expecting fruit on it then. Whereas, if we shall think the reason why he did not find any figs was, that the time of them was not come, we must acknowledge, that the tree was cursed very improperly for having none. This interpretation makes a *trajection* necessary, but there is one of the same kind in Mark, xvi. 3, 4. where the clause, *for it was very great*, namely, the stone at the door of the sepulchre, does not relate to what immediately precedes it, and must be considered pa-

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renthetically, but to the remote member—*They said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? (and when they looked, they saw the stone rolled away)—for it was very great.*

I cannot help here observing, once more, that, when in any writer we meet with absurdities so glaring and palpable as this and others imputed to the evangelists, it is but doing him common justice, whoever he be, to take it for granted that, by some means or other, we misapprehend his meaning; and mere candour should induce us, instead of cavilling and squabbling, gladly to accept of any fair and equitable interpretation of his words, that may serve to clear them of such supposed absurdity, and to set him right in our opinion.

Page 41. Our Saviour is scoffed at, for having affirmed, "that wheat does not produce fruit, except "it *die*."

A grain of corn, when laid in the earth, swells, putrefies, suffers a dissolution of its parts, shoots its fibres, and disappears. This is a *death* and *resurrection* sufficient to answer all the purposes for which the illustration is adduced by our Lord and St. Paul.

Page 42. "John the Baptist being asked if he "were Elias, answered, I am not; but Jesus affirms "the contrary."

He was Elias *in spirit and in power;* but he was not the personal Elias, or Elijah, whom the people erroneously expected, and the priests meant, when they asked him, "Art thou Elias?"

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Page 43. "Out of forty Gospels we receive four "as canonical—Why do we receive them, and not "the rest?"

For the best reasons in the world, assigned at large by Dr. Lardner in his *Credibility*[*], &c. a work which these gentlemen should answer, or for ever hold their peace upon this subject. The true Gospels are shown by proper evidence to have been written at the time when they are said to have been written, and by the persons whose names they bear. It matters not how many others were written, if upon their appearance, after due examination, they were found to be spurious, and rejected as such.

Page 43. The primitive Christians are complained of, for "preventing the arguments against their reli-"gion from being exposed to view."

I hope there is no ground for any such complaint now. There is no argument yet devised against Christianity, we may presume, which has not been proposed in public; and there is none, we may affirm, which has not received its answer.

The few remaining pages of this pamphlet are spent in enumerating some particulars in the history of our Lord's passion and resurrection, which are differently related by the four evangelists. But how many times have these objections been considered, and replied to? Have the infidels the modesty or the conscience to expect, that we are to draw up a new harmony of the Gospels, as often as any one of them shall think proper to ask a few old questions

[*] See the review of his work in the twelfth volume.

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over again? If any Christian find himself perplexed by difficulties of this sort, let him carefully peruse the Gospels as they lie in Macknight's Harmony and Commentary, and weigh well the solutions of such difficulties, with which that book will furnish him.

These gentlemen tell us in plain terms, page 46, that the "event of Christ's resurrection bears every "mark of a forgery;" and speak of the apostles as "men engaged in the attempt of forming a sect or "party," that is, as men who had projected a plan (and thought themselves able to execute it) of persuading the world that their master was risen from the dead, when he was not risen; and of propagating over the earth a new religion, upon the strength of that persuasion. We can know no more of the apostles than the Gospel history, with great simplicity and evident sincerity, informs us. Let any man duly consider their characters and qualifications as there described; let him then stand forth, lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that he can possibly bring himself, for a single moment, to believe they could ever have entertained the thought of projecting and executing such a plan. I should be glad to see that man. I would subscribe handsomely towards erecting a statue to his memory. For, take him either as a fool or a knave, he is at the top of his profession.

But if no such plan by such persons were or could be concerted, then the evidence of the apostles and disciples (to five hundred of whom Christ appeared at once, and among whom he walked in and out for forty days together) is as good and valid for the fact

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of the resurrection, as for any other fact concerning his life or his death. Nor it is true, that "God "chose to deprive all mankind of the proper evi- "dence of the resurrection, because the Jews of that "age were sinners." Whatever evidence it had pleased God to vouchsafe to "the Jews of that age," "all mankind" besides could have received it only upon testimony; and they enjoy now, upon testimony, more and better evidence for the resurrection of Christ, than ever was produced for any one transaction that has happened from Adam to the present hour. The descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the propagation of the Gospel by instruments otherwise totally inadequate to the work; the conversion of so many thousand Jews; the destruction of Jerusalem; and the establishment of the Christian church, in opposition to the efforts of the whole Roman empire—all these considerations, added to the original positive evidence for the fact, and the futility and absurdity of the arguments then and since employed to invalidate it, form such a moral demonstration in its favour—the only demonstration we can have, in cases of this kind—that there must be something very wrong indeed in the head, or the heart, of him who, at this time of day, sets himself to deny and blaspheme it. With joy and pleasure I desire to risk upon the truth of it every thing that is dear to me, in this life, and that which is to come.

Page 47.—It is asked, whether God expects that we should "show our faith and reliance on him by "making a sacrifice of our reason, and believing not "by an act of the understanding, but of the *will?*"

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How necessary, in many cases, the concurrence of the *will* is towards the production of faith, daily experience may convince us. We see men rejecting the strongest evidence, when opposed by interest, prejudice, and passion; and accepting the slightest, which falls in with them. The best arguments in the world avail nothing on one side, when pride, pleasure, and profit are engaged on the other. Hope of what is deemed good, and fear of what is deemed evil, will find means to elude the force of all the syllogisms which the most skilful disciple of Aristotle can frame. "This man," said the rulers of the Jews, "doeth "many miracles."—Acknowledge and receive him, therefore, as a man sent from God.—"No: we will "apprehend and crucify him."—For what reason?—"Because if we let him alone, all men will believe "in him; and the Romans will come and take away "our place and nation"—But he has raised Lazarus from the dead—"Why then, we will put Lazarus to "death again."—What can be done with such people as these? Or what effect would the appearance of Christ among them after his resurrection have produced, but that of provoking fresh blasphemies and fresh insults?

And thus you see, dear Sir, we are come round to the point from whence we set out. Assent to proper evidence is an act of the highest reason. Such evidence for revelation, once established, is not to be set aside, or invalidated, by any difficulties, supposed or real, which may occur in the matter of that revelation. Malice and ignorance will always find room for objections; and *they* will never believe, who have

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no mind to believe. The infidels, therefore, have not ground for the surmise, that we want to "deprive "them of God's best gift." We wish only to teach them the right use of it. Reason is not "the first "and only revelation from God;" for it is, properly speaking, no revelation at all. Man, at his creation, was not left so much as a single day to reason. It is the *eye*, not the *light*. It can with certainty know nothing concerning the things of another world, but by information from thence. To this truth the writings of the best and wisest among the heathen philosophers bear a testimony irrefragable and insurmountable. It is the faculty which enables us upon proper evidence to receive, and after due study to understand, such information. And blessed is he who, at the return of his Lord to judgement, shall be found to have so employed it.

The production which has thus passed under our consideration, from the low and illiberal manner in which it is penned, has been by many accounted to be beneath notice. But nothing is beneath notice, which is calculated to deceive and seduce the ignorant and unwary, among whom, though even now scarce known in the shops, this pamphlet has been privately spread and recommended as a *chef d'œuvre*. And though the execution be coarse and mean, the objections, in substance, are such as continually occur in writings of a much higher class, which make part of the furniture of every circulating library through Great Britain, from whence they pass into the hands of our idle young people of fashion, while under the discipline of the friseur, in the metropolis,

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or at the watering places. The answers published by Nonnotte, Bergier, and others, to the books of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Boulanvilliers, &c. &c. have been much called for, and done eminent service upon the continent: and it is humbly hoped the foregoing strictures may not be without their use here in England.

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A CHARGE

INTENDED

TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED

TO THE CLERGY OF NORWICH,

AT THE

PRIMARY VISITATION

OF

GEORGE, LORD BISHOP OF THAT DIOCESE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE infirmity under which I have laboured for some time past having rendered it impossible for me to meet my Clergy at the customary season, and the great uncertainty when I may be able to recover sufficient strength for that purpose, have induced me to transmit a few lines to them from the press; that so, whenever I am called hence, I may leave some testimony of my regard for them, and attention to their concerns.

They have my thanks for the many instances of their kindness; and, whether living or dying, I pray God to bless them in every good word and work.

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A CHARGE, &c.

Reverend Brethren,

When God surveyed the world which he had made, he saw that every thing was good and perfect in its kind: and such as he made it, such it continues to this day, under a law which shall never be broken. But when we turn our eyes toward the moral world, we find it unsettled and variable. It receives a law which it doth not preserve, but becomes weary of truth, and studious of novelty. The body is continually changing the fashion of its garments, but such fashions may pass and repass with little offence: new opinions, which are the fashions of the mind, are of dangerous influence, especially in religion, where they are most apt to intrude.

We therefore, my brethren, whose office it is to watch for the souls of men, should carefully observe what changes are taking place in our own age and country; what good doctrines are decaying, what evil opinions are rising up and spreading; tracing them, so far as we are able, to the causes and sources from whence they have proceeded. Such an inquiry as this being altogether of a spiritual intention, and for the conduct of which we must one day give a strict

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account to Almighty God, no secular fears, no partial attachments, should interfere to render it ineffectual.

The great doctrines essential to Christianity, and without which it cannot be considered as a religion true in itself or beneficial to us, are those concerning the nature of God; the nature of man; the saving principle of faith; the importance and use of the church; the obedience due to civil government; the necessity of a pure life and holy conversation.

The learned and inquisitive, who see what is passing in the world, need not be informed, that, in this age and this country, there are many dangerous corruptions, many errors propagated in respect to all the doctrines above mentioned. Occasional books and pamphlets, with periodical publications of various descriptions, betray lamentable mistakes in some, and very unwarrantable bitterness in others, against the distinguishing articles of the Christian faith. I do not mean, therefore, to inform my learned brethren of that which they know already; but still it is my duty to remind them, and stir up their attention, that they may unite with me, as I assure myself they will be ready to do, in every good measure, which prudence and piety shall suggest for the preservation of our common faith.

I. That God in his nature is *one Jehovah*, and, in persons, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, is the doctrine into which we are baptized: it meets us every where in the Scriptures, and is therefore very properly interwoven with all the forms and services of our liturgy.

The Trinity of the New Testament is undoubtedly

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the same Jehovah, with his Word and Spirit, in the Old; and Arianism seems to have arisen among those Christians who took up from the Jews, in their state of apostasy, the false ideas they had formed of the God revealed to them by Moses and the prophets[a]. They, who do not agree with us in our belief, appeal to the Scripture *against us*, but do not appear to depend upon it *for themselves;* because they apply so frequently to other topics, as better suiting their purpose, and more accommodated to the feelings of the vain and inexperienced. How often hath it been urged, that we ought not to receive the faith which the first fathers of the church, and the succeeding fathers of the reformation, have delivered to us, because we are of late years so far advanced above them in knowledge? But I have never seen the connexion pointed out between any modern improvements in science, and the new doctrines of reformers in theology. We are certainly much improved, for instance, in the art of making time-keepers, above those who lived a hundred years ago; but no man will say, that we thence derive any advantage for numbering our days more wisely; or that we have any clearer ideas of eternity than we had before. An eminent artist in this way may doubt of the apostles' creed; but then there is no visible relation between his art and his unbelief. The conceit of superior learning has always had an ill effect upon Christian-

[a] Mr. Whitaker, in his *Origin of Arianism disclosed*, seems to have gone upon the right ground; and his work merits consideration.

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ity; and is frequently found in those who have no great matters to value themselves upon. We may be as learned as we can make ourselves, and yet continue good Christians; because true learning and true religion were never yet at variance; but the moment we are vain of our learning, we begin to be in danger, and some folly or other is not far off. The Greeks were unfit to receive the Gospel, because they boasted of a sort of wisdom between which and the wisdom of the Gospel there is no affinity. They delighted to speak of little things in great words; while they who first published the Christian faith, propounded to the world the highest objects in the plainest language. Hence it hath been observed, that persons in the same state of life with the apostles of Jesus Christ, have attained to a great understanding of sacred things; while some scholars of high pretensions have betrayed great dulness and misconception in respect to the same: for our religion ever had, and ever will have, some things which are hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own estimation, and are revealed to persons of teachable, child-like dispositions. The natural and adequate effect of all knowledge, when rightly used, is to make men wiser; but the affectation and abuse of learning have a contrary effect.

Many appear to have been drawn away from the Trinity of revelation by an abuse of abstract reasoning; that is, by presuming upon an analogy which does not exist, between mathematical truth and all other truth. We have seen it argued, seriously in appearance, that three cannot be one in divinity,

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because it is not so in arithmetic. But we are here to distinguish: the mathematical sciences give us rules by which all *quantities* are to be measured; but when those rules are applied by analogy to the *qualities* of things they must fail us, and the experiment is always hazardous. The specific difference between gold and lead, with the respective value of each, is an object of mathematical consideration; but the difference between good and evil is not; for these latter are to be compared and estimated as qualities. God in his nature and his perfections can never be considered under any idea we have of quantity. We know him and describe him by his attributes; all of which are qualities original in Him, and infinite in themselves. It must, therefore, be extremely dangerous to speak of God, and borrow our ideas from terms applied to quantity of any kind.

It may be hazardous to assign the causes of error upon speculation; but facts will speak for themselves. It is well known that most of our enlightened reasoners, who take the highest liberties with the faith of a Trinity in Unity, have been bred in those schools where the sciences which are conversant about quantities claim a superior, if not an exclusive excellence. In their place they are excellent, and give absolute certainty; but in religion, being out of their place, they must of course turn into vain deceit. Let us therefore most humbly wish it to be well considered by those whom it may concern, that mathematicians, merely as such, have in religion no pre-eminence above other men; that mathematical analogies are not transferrable to morality, theology, politics, nor

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to any science which is conversant solely with the qualities of things.

Another prevailing source of error in divinity is the human philosophy of deism, which the deists themselves very improperly term the *religion of nature.* A popular divine, of great talents and reputation, (Dr. S. Clarke,) unhappily conceded to the deists, that an *Unity of Person,* in God, is the *first principle of natural religion:* since which time a nearer relation than was formerly known, hath been growing up between doubting Christians and professed infidels. The attempt seems preposterous, that the wisdom of nature, be it what it may, should dictate to Christianity, which was sent from heaven to dictate to *that,* and is attended with the divine grace necessary to render it receptive of those principles and doctrines which are superior to its own, and must be conclusive against them.—I forbear to insist farther upon this, because natural religion will meet us again as we proceed, and must be considered more fully in another place.

II. Mistakes about *the nature of man* are almost as dangerous as about the nature of God; and the nature of man can be known only from the history of man, of which the Heathens preserved a tradition, but the original is in the Bible. There is a species of moral philosophy which pronounces it injurious to the goodness of the Creator to suppose that man is corrupt: but the present state of man, under sin, is no reflection upon the goodness of God. The wisdom of a political constitution is not impeached, because there are capital punishments inflicted under

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it; for these are not imputable to the laws, but to a freedom of action in those who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, yield to the suggestions of the devil, as our first parents did, and transgress them. Their fall, through the malice of the tempter, gave occasion to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Unless we admit the corruption of man's nature, the whole of Christianity, considered as a medicine, is superfluous and impertinent; as offering remedies which are not needful, and applying itself to infirmities which do not exist. We can never introduce the doctrines of redemption and atonement, salvation by Jesus Christ can never be understood nor wanted, except it be allowed that man is such as the Saviour found him, lame, and blind, and deaf, and dumb, and even *dead* in sin. When we believe this, then Jesus Christ is acceptable to us as the restorer of our nature to light and life; that is, as doing what the Gospel every where describes, and offers to our faith. Many well-meaning Christians of this time thirst after this doctrine, and think they have heard nothing unless they have heard of *salvation by Jesus Christ*, which is what we properly call *the Gospel;* and if they do not hear it in the discourses from our pulpits, where they expect to hear it, they are tempted to wander in search of it to other places of worship: at least, they have a plausible excuse for so doing, though in reality there can be none sufficient in the case, because the church itself, in its liturgy, always preaches the Gospel, and prays according to it. It also furnishes us with a catechism, which teaches the

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true doctrine of the Scripture concerning God and man, the necessity of regeneration, the means of grace, the state of salvation; and therefore the prospect of doing good upon the people is more certain from the use of forms of catechising, than from the common method of preaching on detached points of doctrine. We have, therefore, abundant reason to bless God for the late practice, which hath so universally prevailed throughout the kingdom, of instructing poor children in the doctrines of our church catechism. For teaching is beneficial, as well to the teacher himself, as to the learner: he is confined to a form of truth; and by dwelling oft upon it, he sees deeper into it, and becomes daily more attached to it. The fall of man, and the impotence of nature, will never be doubted by those who are properly instructed in their early years. They who are not so instructed, too often wander into wild opinions; and when they are grown high-minded, they delight in such works only as feed their vanity and multiply their errors; and an ambitious desire of being leaders in a party, inspires them with such a zeal for making proselytes, as is rarely to be found among the children of truth.

III. But, though these evils may in a great measure be prevented by timely catechising, and there is a provision in the liturgy for keeping up in the people a proper sense of the *saving power of faith* (the subject which comes next under consideration), yet it must have a bad effect, and afford just cause of complaint, if the same be not also found in our preaching. Of late times, there hath been a preju-

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dice in favour of good moral preaching; as if the people might do very well, or even better, without the knowledge of the Christian mysteries; a good moral life being the end of all teaching. The enemies of Christianity, taking advantage of this prejudice, have made a total separation between the works of religion and its doctrines; pleading the example and authority of some of our divines. And it must not be concealed that, by delivering cold inanimate lectures on moral virtue, independent of Christianity, many of our clergy of late years have lost themselves very much in the estimation of the religious part of the laity. I would therefore beg your attention, while I remind you of a distinction which a sense of your own duty, without any admonition from me, will lead you frequently to observe and enlarge upon; I mean the great and obvious distinction between religion and morality: and here, by religion is to be understood the *Christian* religion; and by morality, such good works are independent of it. Religion is the rule which teaches us to believe in God and to worship him. Its three great duties are faith, hope, and charity. Morality is the rule which teaches us to live soberly and honestly. It hath four chief virtues, which moral writers have well explained; justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. By justice we give to every man what is due to him. Temperance is the rule whereby we restrain the appetites of the body, which are all naturally given to excess. Prudence is that foresight which distinguishes good from evil, by the consequences of each; and fortitude teaches us to meet danger and bear sufferings. All

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these virtues are so useful one to another, that they cannot well subsist when they are separated. He who is without temperance will not preserve his justice, because he will waste in self-indulgence what is is due to other men; and he who hath no prudence to consider consequences, will not be guarded against intemperance. It is evident these virtues are necessary for carrying us through life with honour and safety; therefore we exhort all Christians to the practice of them. But the difference which we are always to bear in mind is, that the unbeliever, having no Christian principles, practises these virtues as well as he can, on secular and selfish considerations, in conformity to commandments of his own making; while the Christian, animated by hopes and motives peculiar to revelation, acts for the love of God, and in obedience to Jesus Christ; knowing that we are not to be saved for any thing we do, but for that faith in the promises, and that love to God and man, with which it is done. There is a justice and propriety in our being saved by faith rather than by works, because all good works, of every kind, may be practised in hypocrisy; they may proceed from the base motives of ambition, vanity, or self-interest, in which God hath no part: but in faith there can be no hypocrisy; because moral virtue is between man and man, but faith is between man and God, who seeth the heart, and cannot be imposed upon. Therefore no virtue can be certain and universal but that of faith; which consideration entitles it to be the saving principle in the Christian, as it was in the patriarchal religion. It is this only which extinguishes

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the pride of reason, and gives to God the glory of our salvation. It is this only which brings all men to a state of equality. It is accommodated to every condition of life, for it costs nothing; and while it reduces the rich, by obliging them to a renunciation of the world, it raises the ability of the poor, by giving as much effect to a cup of cold water, as to the treasures of the wealthy. The same rule obtains remarkably in the powers of the mind; for the wise and prudent of this world, who appear strong in understanding, are sometimes found very weak in faith; and those endowments of learning which should bring them nearer to God, often carry them farther from him; while the poor and simple have that faculty of the soul, that inestimable talent of a believing heart, which enables man to receive and understand the things of heaven. In every possible sense, but the literal, are those words of the prophet fulfilled—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain "and hill shall be made low;" for in the kingdom of God, as it subsists in the heart of man, none of those inequalities are found which are every where so observable in nature; and faith is the principle which levels them all.

Morality without religion is the scheme of the deists; who yet, that they may not seem destitute of a system, affect a religion which they call *natural*. But *their* natural religion hath no affinity to Christianity: it is inconsistent with it, and opposite to it. It hath no Saviour, no Sanctifier, no fall of man, no atonement, no sacrifice, no sacraments, no Sabbath, no tempter, no church, no priesthood, no resurrec-

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tion, no life everlasting. It hath no creed; for it hath nothing to form a creed upon; and so is a religion without that principle, which alone gives value and signification to every moral action. The Heathens never depended for acceptance on any such plan of religion; they had recourse to rites of worship, sacrifices, supplications, and other acts of what we call *devotion*, for obtaining the pardon of sin, and the averting of divine vengeance. Natural religion, *as a system*, is a phenomenon risen up in these latter times; infidelity seems to have been increasing upon us ever since: and as the unedifying morality of our pulpits is a growth from the same root, we need not wonder at the zeal and earnestness with which it hath very lately been treated, by a learned and able prelate of this church [b], whose words are the words of wisdom, and his example worthy of imitation. Natural religion, therefore, from the ill use which hath been made of it, should at least be re-examined, and better defined; that if we have allowed more to it than we ought, and have hurt the cause of Christianity by giving advantage to its adversaries, we may go back again, as wise men have often found occasion to do; and this is one good use they make of their experience. There was an excellent work published many years ago by a learned divine of the church of Ireland [c], which opened the eyes of many scholars, showing by plain argument, and undoubted

[b] See the bishop of St. David's Charge.

[c] Ellis's *Knowledge of divine things from revelation; not from reason, or nature.*

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evidence of facts, whence all our *knowledge of divine things* ever was, and ever must be derived; and it is much to be wished, that some proper hand would reduce the argument of that book to a compendium, for the benefit of the younger students in divinity. I am convinced this would deliver us from much danger, and shorten many of our disputes. Can that system of religion be with propriety styled *natural*, which never yet was discovered by uninstructed, untutored man? or that be deemed a *religion* calculated for man in his present estate, which leaves out of the account the doctrines of his *fall* and his *restoration?* No serious clergyman needs to be asked, whether he wishes to teach his congregation in such a manner, and with such doctrine, as will promote their eternal salvation. It would be an insult to raise a question in such a case; and, therefore, if any of us, from the prejudice of education, the force of example, or the want of timely attention and inquiry, have ever inclined to a barren form of teaching, let us endeavour, for the time to come, to speak and to labour in our proper character, as ambassadors, who have a message from heaven, which they are bound to deliver at the peril of their own souls; trusting that the Gospel, where it is genuine, will be followed by that grace and power which never yet failed to attend it. "In "the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise up and "walk!" This was the *Gospel*, energetic and effective: it gave the ability with the command; the lame man felt it through all his powers; "he arose, he "walked, he leaped, he praised God." So will the people be edified, and we shall be able to give a good

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account of our charge, at that time, when the fashion of this world, and, with it, all that is human in religion and learning, shall vanish away.

IV. The *constitution and use of the Church of Christ* is another subject, on which our principles, for some years past, have been very unsettled, and our knowledge precarious and superficial. Ignorance is dangerous here, because there are so many whose interest it is to flatter us in it, and take advantage of it. The definition of the church, contained in our articles, was purposely less definitive than it might have been, to avoid giving farther offence to those whom we rather wished to reconcile; but it does not appear, that the church hath gained any thing by its moderation: it hath rather lost; because in virtue of that moderation, it hath been pleaded against us, that ecclesiastical unity may be dispensed with, and that all our differences in this matter are only problematical and immaterial.

But salvation is a gift of grace; that is, it is a free gift, to which we have no natural claim. It is not to be conceived within ourselves, but to be received, in consequence of our Christian calling, from God himself, through the means of his ordinances. These can no man administer to effect, but by God's own appointment; at first, by his *immediate* appointment, and afterwards, by *succession* and derivation from thence, to the end of the world. Without this rule, we are open to imposture, and can be sure of nothing; we cannot be sure that our ministry is effective, and that our sacraments are realities. We are very sensible the spirit of division will never

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admit this doctrine; yet the spirit of charity must never part with it. Writers and teachers who make it a point to give no offence, treat these things very *tenderly;* but he, who, in certain cases, gives men no offence, will for that reason give them no instruction. Light itself is painful to weak eyes; but delightful to them when grown stronger, and reconciled to it with use; and he who was instrumental in bringing them to a more perfect state of vision, though less acceptable at first, may yet, for his real kindness, be more cordially thanked afterwards, than if he had made the ease and safety of his own person the measure of his duty. It is by no means evident, that the church hath ever recommended itself the more by receding from any of its just pretensions. Generosity obliges and secures a friend; but an enemy construes it into weakness; and then it never does any good. Yet the adversaries of the church of England have always been persuading her to make the experiment, and have promised great things from it: with what views, it cannot be difficult to discover. It was an unhappy circumstance, and had very ill effects, when some pious men, of more zeal than discretion, who set out on the work of reforming this nation, opened an asylum for penitents which took in people of all persuasions, without exception of any[4]. It came to be inferred from hence, that souls might be saved as well without as with a church; perhaps better: and

[4] See Mr. Wesley's first account of the Institution of Religious Societies among the Methodists.

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when men have once begun to *neglect* rules, they go on to *despise* them, and know not where to stop, till all things are brought into confusion. An enthusiast of modern date (Baron Swedenborg) opens his *New Jerusalem Church* on a plan almost as wide as that of *Masonry* itself; to take in even Quakers, who have neither church nor ordinances of any kind. It is curious to observe, that, in the same age, new and strange ways are affected of curing both the *souls* and *bodies* of men. And it now seems a duty incumbent on the College of Physicians, to guard their patients against the prevailing influence of medical imposture; as it certainly is in the church, to guard her people against new and strange ways of salvation. We are informed, that the liberties taken of late years against the ministry of the church, have terminated in an attempt to begin a spurious episcopacy, or an episcopacy *without succession*, in the American colonies: a particular account of the affair has been published in a Life of Mr. John Wesley, and the case appears to have been as reported. Mr. Wesley, when questioned about this fact in his life-time, did not deny it, but pleaded *necessity* to justify the measure. See Memoirs of the Rev. John Wesley, by John Hampson, vol. ii. p. 171, 8vo. —a fatal precedent, if it should be followed. For if a presbyter can consecrate a bishop, we admit that a man may confer a power, of which he is not himself possessed: instead of "the less being "blessed of the greater," the "greater is blessed "of the less," and the order of all things is inverted.

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Much mischief hath been done by unfaithful *histories* of the church, written, with a partial intention, by authors as much disaffected to its doctrine as to its constitution and authority. Every man knows how much it is against him, when an importunate adversary, who hath ill will to his person, hath the delivery of his character to those who are not acquainted with him. This happens very frequently to the church; and young or ignorant readers are poisoned past recovery. The most faithful modern histories which can be found should be consulted, and the fountains of antiquity resorted to. The ancient church is the standard by which all modern ones are to be examined; and unless a man knows what the church was in centuries before the Reformation, he will see but darkly into the troubled water of later times, in which faction and party have confounded things; and it hath become as much the interest of some, that the church of Christ should be found *every where*, as it is the desire of others, that it should be found *no where*. Some historians, being affected to the superstitions of Popery, will speak more than the truth; others, being at variance with all establishments, will speak less than the truth; and between both, ecclesiastical history becomes perplexed and adulterated. This is one of the lamentable evils, to which we are subject in these latter days of Christianity. To such as would study deeply, it hath been recommended, to compare the annals of Baronius with the centuriators of Magdebourg, that the truth may be drawn from both parties, tempering and qualifying each other. This may

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do well for detecting the innovations of the church of Rome: but if we would guard against popular mistakes in the subject at large, it will be necessary to examine first, what the church was under the Old Testament; for there we find its original establishment, its form, its authority, its ministry, its unity and uniformity, its maintenance, its independence; which things being so particularly laid down, no new establishment is to be found in the Epistles or the Gospels of the New Testament, but the ancient constitution is referred to; to show us, in certain cases, what ought to be, from what had been. So zealous was our blessed Saviour for the preservation of peace and obedience, that even under the most corrupt state of the church (worse, we hope, than any man can discover now amongst us), he enjoined his hearers to submit to those who then taught in the *seat of Moses;* allowing, bad as they were, that they had their authority by succession, and, on that consideration, were to be religiously obeyed, however greatly they had deviated from the wisdom and purity of their original institution. From the Scripture we should proceed next to observe, what the church was in the first ages of the Gospel, before worldly policy, mis-called moderation, had any influence upon the opinions of Christians. There is an epistle of St. Clement, on church unity and church authority, with which all students in divinity should be acquainted. It will teach them what the Christian society then was, and what it ought to be. Ignatius and Cyprian, both of them martyrs, will give farther instruction. The latter is so particular

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and copious, that a code of discipline might nearly be formed upon his authority. With these preparations, we shall be better able to judge of what happened at the Reformation, when many things were right, and many wrong; when the church of England, by the singular blessing of God, preserved its constitution and its doctrines, while many of the reformed fell off by degrees, some into disorder, some into dissolution. What remains with us we must defend and preserve; trusting that the same God who hath raised this church, when trodden down to the dust, will never forsake us, till we forsake him[e]. To those who would read for purposes of piety (as necessary to scholars as to the common people) our Mr. Nelson will afford great edification; and it is a conciliating circumstance, that so excellent a work, upon the festivals and fasts of the church, came from the hands of a layman.

V. Next in order to the constitution of the church, is the constitution of the *state*. Many corrupt and strange opinions are current amongst us in respect to civil government; and they are circulated with all that zeal with which men usually act when they have some lust to gratify. There is none more ungovernable than the lust of power; and that the way to it may always be open, new rights are pleaded which no laws in the world ever yet recognized, because they are not consistent with that subordination and right of possession, which are essential in society.

[e] See An *Essay on the Church*, by a worthy Clergyman of this Diocese, printed at Gloucester, and to be had of Messrs. Robinson, Paternoster-row, London.

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A natural equality amongst mankind is contradictory to the actual condition of human nature. Women are not equal to their husbands, children are not equal to their parents, the foolish are not equal to the wise, the idle and dissolute are not equal to the sober and industrious. They cannot have equal rights, because the rights of man in society, so long as we admit that there is a divine law and a moral government of the world, are the rights of duty, and virtue, and religion; and no other rights can subsist in a state of civilization. The society which admits the rights of violence and rapine, is *felo de se.*

Equal liberty is another idea which cannot take place in society, because men are not equal in virtue. For as there are no rights but the rights of virtue, there is no liberty but the liberty to which virtue entitles us. Thieves and assassins have no claim to liberty in common with honest men; and therefore all laws deprive them of it, for the safety of the public. He who has forfeited the right to his life, must have forfeited his liberty along with it. The man who kills another without law, is himself under sentence of death by the law of God; and, by parity of justice, that man must forfeit the right to his own property, who by violence deprives another of his possessions. Liberty of thought there must be in all men, good and bad, because it cannot be prevented; but the liberty of overt action, which is the only liberty that will please libertines, there cannot be, till the laws of God lose their force, and society itself is dissolved.

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It has frequently been repeated by writers of a certain description, that kings and magistrates are the *servants* of the people, and this, in a sense of inferiority and subjection, like other servants. But if kings are the servants, where are the subjects? If all are fathers, where are the children? If all are shepherds, where are the sheep?

My brethren, these opinions fall under our consideration, not as we are politicians, but as we are concerned for the preservation of the divine laws, and the peace of the world in which we live. There is a blessing pronounced upon the peace makers; and what better way can we find of promoting the public peace, than by inculcating the principles of peace and the duty of obedience; that according to the admonition of the apostle, we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty? By *politics* we mean the art of governing a city; the measures which are to be adopted on any emergency for the public safety: the convenience of treaties, the management of the public treasure, and the preparations for war. With these, indeed, a preacher of the Gospel, as such, having no concern, leaves it to proper persons to strike out their own schemes and pursue their own theories. *Our* political wisdom is nothing more than the honest and easy part of political duty, to be drawn from the word of God, where the case is made exceedingly plain to all whose minds are properly disposed. No doctrine is delivered to us in more decisive language, than that God is the King of kings, the only original of power; and that our duty, as Christians, is derived

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from this consideration, and to be regulated thereby. God being also the supreme Lawgiver, and the fountain of justice, he that executes the law of this justice, judges for him who is the judge of all: therefore, as the divine law itself has stated the case for us, he that resists that power which executes the laws of divine justice, resisteth that ordinance of God, which is necessary to the preservation of society. To resist the power of God in his own person, is impossible; he can be resisted only in the persons of those who act under him, and for him; and, when this happens, he takes it to himself. Who, therefore, would have expected to hear, in a Christian country, that rebellion exists only in the estimation of the public from the accident of a miscarriage? and that rebellion ceases to be such, when it succeeds? Horrid doctrines! the tendency of which is, to lay us open to the lust of power, or the violence of rapine, and turn the world into an Aceldama, a field of blood! I must confess it hath astonished and afflicted me, when I have seen the power of God, his authority as a Lawgiver, his providence in governing and disposing of kingdoms, as totally omitted and forgotten by writers on civil liberty, as if no such things had ever been heard! Self-will, self-government, liberty as we like it, and property as we can seize upon it, have taken the place of divine law, and divine power, and every man is become his own providence.

All mistakes concerning civil government arise either in the variety of human philosophy, specu-

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lating on the origination and primeval state of mankind, against better information, or from self-will and self-interest affecting sedition and confusion, through the pride of an ambition, or the neediness of vice. Where these causes operate, they will produce strange books, and strange speeches, such as betray that blindness which hath been observed to fall upon nations, previous to their destruction; and therefore we are to pray, that what is past may be forgotten, and that we may be delivered from such appearances in the time to come; that the dangerous animosity of a party-spirit may cease amongst us, and that Englishmen, as their duty and happiness require, may we love one another better every day. Our security will be in setting aside all worldly considerations, and confining ourselves to the plain path of Christian duty, under an assurance that this will prove to be our best policy and interest. To preserve us from wild speculations, it will be useful also to look back to the principles on which societies have been regulated in ancient times, and how they have succeeded and prospered; for it is as dangerous to society as to religion, to imagine that there was neither wisdom nor experience in those who went before us; but that all the difficulties of past ages are come down to be solved by this generation. And here I recollect with pleasure and gratitude, that all farther reflections on this subject are rendered needless by a late work of a learned and eloquent layman, who hath very effectually exposed those wild opinions lately risen up to disturb the peace of mankind; and hath called us back to the measures of common sense and experience, at a

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time when we were hasting toward anarchy, under the specious name of liberty; pointing out to us a more excellent way, which if we follow, we shall do well. As Christians and Englishmen, we are unquestionably obliged to those, who are not afraid to declare themselves against the overbearing violence of licentious principles, and the torrent of calumny which followeth so closely after them: and it is to be hoped, *our* zeal will be stirred up by so laudable an example. If there be a blessing for him who reconciles individuals at strife, or families when divided, there must be a double portion for those who infuse into a nation the spirit of peace, and with a god-like beneficence check that rising storm which would tear us away from our comforts, our possessions, our liberties, and our lives.

VI. But I must now hasten, in the last place, to a subject of more quietness, and less suspicion, in which wise men of all persuasions are more nearly of a mind; I mean, *the conduct of the Christian life.* Modern times and new modes of education have given too great a latitude in the articles of dress, and dissipation, and self-indulgence. Every thing is to be avoided, which tends to diminish that gravity and seriousness which God expects to find in all those who are flying from the wrath to come. It was observed of old, that when inconsiderate people are avoiding one extreme they commonly fall into another, while reason and discretion keep the middle way. When protestants laid aside the austerities of superstition, they began to see less harm in the liberties taken by the world. The kind of life to which the first Christians conformed, hath been con-

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sidered as a sort of *heroic* piety, which had more of suffering and mortification than are now required of us; as if the way to heaven could be easier, while the number of our temptations is probably increasing from the refinements of modern times, which, instead of giving us more liberty, call upon us for a greater degree of caution and reserve. One indulgence, when it becomes fashionable, begets another; and a progress of descent (for such is this) is subject to an acceleration which ends in total precipitation and destruction. Many of our younger clergy, when they come to look back upon their past years, will see that their ministerial character was not sufficiently marked and distinguished according to the rules of the church, which are all within the measures of prudence and decency. The world judges very much of men by their outward appearance. They never look for much gravity in the mind if too much levity is visible in the person. If the article of dress is much attended to, they naturally suspect that severer studies have been neglected. Of these things the laity are as competent judges as the clergy, and they will judge for themselves, whether we give them leave or not. They will judge, that in all impropriety, there must be some degree of absurdity; and that no man, whatever his talents may be, can be respectable out of his proper character; on which considerations, every prudent person will, in respect of his outward appearance, become his own censor.

There is, in the present times, a temptation which lies very hard on some minds, and either does so much mischief, or hinders so much good, that it is

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a dreadful snare, and I wish I could guard my brethren effectually against it; I mean, the fear of being suspected of false piety. It can never be sufficiently lamented, that the practice of devotion, and the doctrine of grace so essential to the Gospel, should have fallen into disrepute, from the example of any persons who have been discovered to have acted a godly part for mercenary purposes. But God forbid, that the hypocrisy of others should lead us into lukewarmness and indifference, which are equally bad. Never let it be supposed that Christians can serve God without the grace of God, because some have been so weak as to surfeit the wise with the presumption and folly of their spiritual pretensions. The life of devotion is still the gift of God; and it must be insisted upon, with our church, that there is not in man one good thought, one holy desire, but from the continual inspiration of the Divine Spirit *in all things directing and ruling our hearts*. Without this doctrine, we may be scholars and critics, and men of taste; we may be the monitors and moralists of civil society; but we are no longer to be considered as Christian divines, neither will our labours be attended with any saving effect.

Lastly, that we may all serve God in the purity of his Gospel, we are to remember, that the Christian life differs essentially from what was called morality among the heathens. For to us, Jesus Christ is the pattern of holiness, the great exemplar of perfection, of whom we are first to learn, what no heathen ever professed, to be *meek and lowly in heart;* and accordingly, one of the best books extant on the

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spiritual life, is entitled, *the Imitation of Jesus Christ.* Its language is barbarous, but its matter is divine and heavenly, and hath administered instruction and consolation to thousands of devout Christians. The way of true devotion must still be understood to be the same humble, secret, unaffected, unaspiring practice of piety, as it used to be of old. The cross, which Jesus Christ carried for our salvation, is still the true emblem of our profession, from our baptism to our departure out of this life, and is to be borne by us in our minds, as a daily admonition to patient suffering and self-denial.

He who was tempted in the wilderness, prayed in retirement and solitude, taught in the temple, and went about doing good, did all these things to teach his disciples, that they also must resist temptation, must converse with God in retirement, serve him zealously in his church, and do good to the souls and bodies of their Christian brethren, visiting them in their sickness, relieving them in their poverty, and teaching them in their ignorance, to the best of their ability. The example of Christ, being the plainest and the shortest rule, is the best way we can follow or recommend for this purpose.

To assist us in the great duties of prayer and meditation, books of devotion have their use; but to us of the clergy, the liturgy of our church is the best companion, and the daily use of it in our churches or families is required by the canons. It cannot be denied, that from various reasons prevailing amongst us, we are much fallen off, of late years, from the practice of weekly prayers in our churches. Wherever this hath been neglected, we should exhort the

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people to the revival of it, if circumstances will possibly permit; and alarm them against a mistake, to which they are all exposed, from a fanatical prejudice of baneful influence, namely, that they come to church only to hear preaching; and hence they are indifferent, even on a Sunday, to the prayers of the church, unless there is a sermon. But if sermons have not already taught them, that they are to be saved by the life and fire of devotion in their own hearts, little is to be expected from all the sermons they will hear in time to come. Devotion is a flame, which, like other flames, is given to spread. If a clergyman appears to be zealous in the duty of public prayer, the people will be thereby excited to attend him. But if he appears to be indifferent, they will continue to be so; and though their indevotion will be no excuse for his, his will always be assumed as an excuse for theirs. There is a prospect, that the next age may be better disposed, in this respect, than the present, from the late practice of gathering such multitudes of children together in our Sunday-schools, and accustoming them early to the service of the church. If it should prove so, all good people, who shall live to see it, will be gratified with the sight, the church will be edified, God will be glorified, and the people of England, as a nation, will have a better title to the blessings of peace and prosperity.

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